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Mr Darren Barrow
St John's Primary School
Mortimer Road
Kenilworth
Warwickshire
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Dear Mr Barrow

Short inspection of St John's Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 2014

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Working alongside a strong and well developed team of leaders, you have created a very strong ethos that is highly praised by staff, pupils, parents and carers. Staff are reflective about the way in which they teach. They are trusted to take risks and continued professional development has a high profile in the school. Parents are unanimously positive about the school. They said that staff do all they can to support them and their children. One parent said, 'I could not be happier with this school, my son loves being there, the level of education and nurturing from the staff is wonderful. The way they make you feel involved is really special.' Another said, 'I have been over the moon with the care, attention and teaching my children are receiving.'

The school's reputation as a good school has led to you supporting a number of other schools and leaders in your locality in your role as a national leader of education.

Since the previous inspection, you and your governing body have worked hard to address the key areas for improvement. For example, the way teachers question pupils, an issue at the last inspection, is now a strength within the school. You were also asked to extend opportunities for key leaders to observe and support learning throughout the school. New approaches to monitoring, including the use of diagnostic days, have improved staff skills and knowledge. The raised awareness to the benefits of sharing good practice has supported teachers in developing their

understanding of high-quality teaching. However, you recognise that there is more to do to challenge more-able pupils, including by further developing mathematical reasoning.

Governors are effective. Some are very new to their role and governors have been proactive in looking at ways that they can strengthen the skillset of the governing body. They bring a range of useful skills and experience to the strategic leadership of the school and provide an appropriate level of challenge to school leaders. Governors analyse detailed information about pupils' progress with some precision. This enables them to ask important questions and understand the school's performance better.

Pupils show high levels of enthusiasm for all that is on offer at the school. They are confident and self-assured. You have provided valuable emotional support for pupils and place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' physical and mental well-being. Pupils are helped to work together effectively; they develop the skills to cope with the challenges they face in school. Pupils are also helped to manage their emotions and their everyday interactions with others, which helps to prepare them for the next stage in their education.

Finally, we discussed the recent developments across the broader curriculum, including developing cross-curricular skills. You are passionate about developing an exciting curriculum and an assessment system based on identifying the knowledge, skills and understanding to be taught within each subject area. There is a clear progression of skills being taught across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is robust. Training is thorough and revisited regularly so that the culture of safeguarding has a high priority. Staff are alert to signs of concern and follow clear referral processes.

Leaders oversee productive links with outside agencies to help pupils receive the timely support they need to keep safe. Leaders ensure that appropriate procedures are followed when pupils no longer attend the school. Leaders' safeguarding records, including those relating to the recruitment of staff, are well organised and fit for purpose.

Staff teach pupils about potential risks they can face and how to manage these risks. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable about online safety and understand how to report any concerns.

Governors conduct regular monitoring visits to assure themselves that pupils are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- We agreed on a number of lines of enquiry to consider during the day. The first

line of enquiry was to look at actions leaders have taken to improve the progress of more-able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. We also agreed to examine what leaders are doing to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in school, in order to diminish the differences in attainment between them and other pupils. Finally, we examined the school's latest information on exclusions.

- Over the last three years, progress for more-able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 was slower for these pupils than for other groups in school. In addition, attainment of disadvantaged pupils in 2017 at key stage 1 was below national figures for all pupils.
- You shared convincing evidence of current pupils' attainment and progress across the school to indicate rapidly rising standards for disadvantaged pupils. You track pupils' achievements regularly and hold teachers to account through regular pupil progress meetings. This is beginning to show improvements, especially in reading within school. More-able pupils in key stage 2 read fluently and provide explanations and reasons for their thinking, and this is deepening their knowledge and understanding.
- During the inspection we discussed the steps taken to improve current pupils' progress in mathematics further in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Current pupils' work shows that they make secure progress over time. The work in their mathematics books shows that they become fluent in number skills as they progress through the school. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to access complex problem-solving activities that develop reasoning and stretch their thinking.
- Writing, including writing across the curriculum, is improving across the school due to a consistent approach to the teaching of grammar and sentence structure. Opportunities are provided for pupils to deepen their understanding of English across a wide range of curriculum areas, through creative cross-curricular topics. Evidence of this is in pupils' books, where they demonstrate their excellent ability to write in different styles and produce extended and interesting accounts of their many school trips and educational visits.
- Overall, leaders recognised that, while current more-able pupils are making improved progress, there is more to do to ensure that they are making progress in line with other pupils, especially in writing and mathematics. In a minority of classes, the most able pupils were observed to not be making as much progress as they could, because teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for these pupils.
- The school's performance data reflects that current disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to their peers. During our joint visits to classrooms, and in books, there was evidence of teachers giving all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, specific direction, and that this was having a positive effect on disadvantaged pupils' progress. We agreed that the most current disadvantaged pupils are making good progress but there is still the potential for the more able disadvantaged pupils to make swifter progress.
- During my visit, we discussed the exclusion rates of your most vulnerable pupils. Numbers are historically very small and you know each individual pupil well. You

have effective procedures in place to monitor pupils' behaviour and exclusions. Your most vulnerable pupils are being supported very well to be in school as much as possible and the school's recent work on pupil well-being is a key strength of the school. As a result of your skilled support, pupils respond very well, and go on to make good progress in their learning

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers extend and challenge the most able pupils, including the more able disadvantaged pupils, so they make the same progress as other groups within school
- pupils continue to develop their mathematical reasoning skills so that all pupils, especially the most able, make increased progress

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Max Vlahakis
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy and acting deputy headteachers. I met with three governors, including the chair. I spoke informally to pupils in the playground and in lessons and to parents as they brought their children into school. I looked at the responses to the Parent View survey and surveys of staff's and pupils' views. We visited lessons together. I looked at the work in a selection of pupils' books. I considered the school's self-evaluation and leaders' plans for development. I took into account evidence of pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress. I checked a range of school policies, including those for safeguarding and child protection.