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Mr Stephen Oldfield
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Dear Mr Oldfield

Short inspection of St John's Stonefold CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your leadership team and your staff ensure that St John's Stonefold is a caring and inclusive school where teachers make learning fun. Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school.

Your leadership provides clear direction for the school and you share your vision and enthusiasm effectively with staff and governors. You have a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through your improved monitoring and evaluation, and use this information well to prioritise actions to bring about change. As a result, you have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

The quality of teaching has improved. Many staff are new to the school since the last inspection. You have selected staff carefully to meet the needs of the school. Appropriate training has developed teachers' subject knowledge and skills well in teaching English, mathematics and science. Consequently, teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan effective learning activities. You have reviewed your feedback and guidance policy and provided additional training for staff. This has resulted in the consistent use of the policy across the school. Pupils now receive frequent opportunities to act upon the high-quality guidance that they now receive to address any misconceptions and improve their work.

Reading has been a particular focus for school improvement since the last inspection and your actions have borne fruit. Outcomes in reading have improved year on year and were in line with the national averages in 2015 and 2016. Disadvantaged pupils particularly benefited from your actions and made similar progress to other pupils nationally. Work in pupils' books and your records of assessments show that this improvement in standards is being maintained. Staff have been well trained in how to teach reading and you use your own expertise in the teaching of English to provide additional support and guidance for them. Governors have allocated funding for new reading books that particularly appeal to many boys. Pupils quickly develop their fluency in reading and have a love of books. They confidently discuss their favourite types of book and their favourite authors. Older pupils use deduction and inference when answering questions about the stories in their reading books.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are secure and are followed diligently. Statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children. Appropriate training ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face. Leaders keep detailed records and share information with appropriate authorities to ensure pupils' safety.

Governors have ensured that appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection, and that pupils are kept safe through effective online safety procedures. Pupils know about the different types of bullying, including those related to gender identity, and say that staff respond quickly and effectively to deal with any incidents that may occur.

Inspection findings

- Governors effectively monitor the work of the school and often ask searching questions. Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, based on your comprehensive reports to them. They frequently visit the school to see pupils and staff at work and use these visits well to check the accuracy of the information they receive.
- Governors ensure that all required information is readily available in school. However, they have not rigorously checked that this information is published online. They recognise that further work is needed to ensure that the school's website is kept up to date and they have nominated a governor as a website auditor. However, the impact of this role is yet to be realised.
- Governors have an appropriate and comprehensive policy in place to deal with any formal complaints, which they follow closely. Governors consider carefully and respond appropriately to any other informal concerns that are raised, while rightly observing appropriate rules of confidentiality in their responses.
- You closely monitor and analyse pupils' absences from school. As a result, you are aware that a small number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have

special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend as often as other pupils in school. Many of these pupils are absent for valid reasons, such as medical needs. Systems are in place to ensure that any absences are quickly followed up to identify the reasons for them. You challenge unacceptable absence through formal warning letters, attendance meetings with parents and appropriate referrals to the local authority for further action. As a result of your concerted action, attendance has improved and was above the national average in 2016. The number of persistent absentees is falling.

- The quality of teaching of phonics is effective. The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the key stage 1 phonics check shows sustained improvement. In 2015 and 2016, it was above the national average. Teachers have a secure knowledge of phonics and use this knowledge effectively to systematically develop pupils' understanding by carefully matching activities to their abilities. Teachers make good use of links to other subjects and curriculum themes to make phonics fun and improve pupils' spelling and vocabulary. In one class, pupils frequently link phonics to physical activity in their regular phonics aerobics sessions. On rare occasions, teachers sometimes confuse letter names and sounds when helping pupils to spell words or occasionally staff mispronounce words. A small number of pupils develop incorrect pronunciation.
- You were disappointed in the outcomes in science at the end of key stage 2, in 2016, where the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, was below the national average. You have taken appropriate action to improve the leadership of science and bring about improvement.
- Your newly appointed subject leader for science has a secure knowledge of the subject and is well trained in subject leadership. She has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject because of her rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils across key stages 1 and 2 study a wide range of topics, often to greater depth, and make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils extend their knowledge of the science of space to a much greater depth, for example studying the science of nebulae and the planet Jupiter, through a popular and well-resourced after-school astronomy club. Regular visits from scientists share exciting science experiments in class and assemblies. Pupils receive frequent opportunities to undertake practical work, but opportunities to apply their knowledge and improve their skills in scientific enquiry are more limited.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers refresh their phonic skills to eliminate any instances of mispronunciation of letter sounds and names

- pupils apply their knowledge and develop their scientific enquiry skills to a greater depth
- governors keep the information on the new school website up to date and compliant with information regulations.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the subject leader for science, teaching staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with an adviser from the local authority. I spoke with pupils during lessons and around the school. I took account of the information contained within responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents, Parent View. There were no responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires. I spoke with and took account of the views of a number of parents at the start of the school day.

I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, looked at their work in books and listened to some pupils read. I reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, action plans and other policies in school. I looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep children safe, recruitment checks and record-keeping.