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Mrs Budd  
Headteacher  
St Thomas and St Anne CofE Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Budd

### **Short inspection of St Thomas and St Anne CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 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 October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

Leaders and governors have established a strong culture of learning and high expectations at the school. The school's work is underpinned by its Christian ethos and values. Pupils' behaviour was very good throughout the inspection. Pupils are keen to share their learning and talk about school life. Older pupils show a clear understanding of the school's behaviour policy and are confident that any concerns they place into their class 'worry boxes' will be answered.

The headteacher has a clear handle on the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors work closely with the headteacher to review the school's progress over time. They offer both challenge and support. Policy and practice within the school are well established and staff report that they are proud of what they do. Any weaknesses have been quickly addressed over time. Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 were lower than the national average in 2016. A range of strategies, including support from the local authority, have ensured that attainment is now rising in key stage 2. Outcomes in the early years, the Year 1 phonics screening check and key stage 1 continue to rise and are above national averages.

Since the last inspection, there has been a relatively high level of staff turnover. Though these circumstances have been unavoidable, leaders and governors recognise that this has involved additional change for pupils and their families to manage.

Governors have restructured the staff team so that there is greater capacity in

leadership. After a period of change, teachers and support staff are now more established in their roles. New middle leaders are enthusiastic and keen to further develop their skills.

Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, shared mixed views about the school. Parental concerns include the quality of the school's communication with them and staff turnover. That said, some parents are very satisfied with the school and submitted comments to Ofsted's free-text service to express how pleased they are. One parent commented: 'We have found the school to be a caring, nurturing environment and our child has grown in confidence, which has been wonderful to see.'

The school has established a range of ways for parents to share their views. These include termly 'Parent Council' meetings. Prior to these meetings, a box is placed in the school foyer for parents to submit their views. The school also conducts regular questionnaires. Questionnaires from 2017 and in the last month evidence high levels of satisfaction among parents. Nonetheless, leaders and governors listened carefully to the key themes and concerns that have been raised through the inspection process. The school's leaders and managers are committed to acting upon feedback and securing any necessary improvements.

Leaders are proud of the work that has been undertaken to improve physical education (PE) and sports provision. Additional funding has been used effectively to increase pupils' participation in sporting activities. Staff have also trained older pupils to be 'sports leaders'. These pupils co-ordinate activities at lunchtimes for their peers. Staff receive training and support from coaches with specific skills in different aspects of sports provision. As a result, staff are more confident to teach a wide range of activities, skills and games.

At the last inspection, leaders and governors were asked to: increase the proportion of outstanding lessons by ensuring that teachers make more frequent checks on learning; provide pupils with more opportunities to learn about others who do not live in Shropshire; and make sure that all staff and governors are clear about the role they play in driving school improvement.

The staffing structure is now established. Governors have recruited a range of new staff who are competent and skilled teachers. As a result, teaching continues to improve and standards are rising across the school. Staff pay close attention to ensuring that pupils are fully engaged in their learning. Pupils are able to explain what they are doing and why. However, there are limited opportunities for staff to share their practice. This is in part due to the size of the school. However, leaders and governors recognise that this is an area where staff training and development can be improved further.

Staff and governors are very clear about the role they play in school improvement. Governors have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors' skills are matched against different areas of provision to accelerate improvements. However, some success criteria within the school's improvement

documents are too broad. The criteria do not adequately specify the improvements that leaders hope to secure.

Since the last inspection, the school has made links with a setting in another local authority and is beginning to establish some international links. Pupils learn about other faiths and religions through a programme of religious education and the promotion of fundamental British values. Pupils' books show that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority. Since September, pupils from different key stages have explored topics including: 'What is Peace?', Diwali, Islam making friendship webs, knowing who to talk to if you have a concern, making people feel welcome, staying safe around dogs and e-safety.

Though the school is improving and remains good, there is scope for further development in several areas. The school's enthusiastic middle leaders now require more opportunities to enhance their skills by extending their monitoring activities. Some analysis of the progress of different groups of children is too narrow. It can be unhelpful to analyse very small groups, however, some cohorts are big enough to warrant further analysis of pupils' progress, particularly in relation to any gaps between boys and girls. There are currently limited opportunities for teachers to share what they know works well. Leaders and governors recognise that they must continue to take account of, and act upon, feedback from parents.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is effective and arrangements are fit for purpose. The headteacher and governors have created a culture of safeguarding within the school. Two additional staff have been trained to a higher level to support the headteacher in responding to any concerns. Several staff and governors have completed safer recruitment training. Staff who I spoke to during the inspection have a very strong knowledge and understanding of the signs of different forms of abuse. Staff are clear about how they should handle specific concerns should they ever arise.

Attendance is monitored by the headteacher in conjunction with the administrative staff and an education welfare officer (EWO). Rates of persistent absence have been above the national average in recent years. The school's latest data shows that this is now improving. The headteacher and EWO have developed an effective action plan that pinpoints, and is starting to address, issues that contribute towards irregular attendance.

### **Inspection findings**

- Standards in reading at the end of key stage 2 have fluctuated over the last three years. As a result of improvements to teaching, and the implementation of new approaches, standards are now rising and rates of progress are strong. There is some variation in the higher rates of progress that pupils make in lower key stage 2. Leaders are aware of this and are tracking improvements through regular pupil progress meetings. Though standards are improving, teachers are not routinely sharing the aspects of their teaching that they know work best. As a

result, there is some variation in the quality of teachers' planning of the teaching of reading across the school.

- Over the last two years, there has been some variation between the progress of boys and girls in writing at the end of key stage 2. Pupils' writing is now a growing strength of the school. Pupils have opportunities to write extended pieces of work and practise their skills daily in English lessons. In 2017, the school's English, grammar, punctuation and spelling results improved considerably and were above the national average. The inspector reviewed the standard of boys' writing across the school and found that boys make strong progress in their writing.
- The school tracks the performance of pupils at an individual and class level effectively. However, information about the performance of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, is not as detailed. Though groups are often very small, cohort sizes do warrant further analysis in some year groups. Without this additional analysis, it is not easy for leaders and governors to keep a close check on any emerging gaps between different groups.
- Though small in numbers, disadvantaged pupils are well supported. The school tracks this particular group of pupils effectively and its own assessment information shows that they make similar rates of progress to their peers. This progress is evident in pupils' books. The headteacher and governors set out a clear strategy for pupil premium expenditure and are precise about any barriers that pupils may have to learning.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is well established. Each class has a dedicated file for this group of pupils that sets out individual pupil targets and additional support. Teachers use information within files to monitor pupils' progress on an ongoing basis.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work continues to develop the skills of middle leaders by involving them in more monitoring activities so that they are able to improve their areas of responsibility further
- the performance of different groups of pupils is monitored with greater scrutiny by leaders and governors
- there are more opportunities for teachers to share their practice and learn from one another
- there are effective strategies in place for parents to share their views.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

At the start of the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's key strengths and areas for development. We agreed several key lines of enquiry to structure inspection activity.

I observed teaching in every classroom. Observations were undertaken jointly with you. I scrutinised pupils' progress by reviewing books in every key stage and a wide range of assessment information.

I reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, including: records and files, risk assessments, policies, the single central record and training records. I discussed safeguarding with a group of staff to ascertain their knowledge and understanding of: potential risk factors for different forms of abuse; the school's procedures for managing concerns about pupils; and the management of any allegations against staff.

I met with the school's middle leaders to discuss their actions to improve standards in English and mathematics. I met with a middle leader to review the expenditure of the PE and sport premium funding.

I took account of feedback from: 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 18 responses on free text and nine responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. I met with parents at the start of the day as pupils arrived at school.

I reviewed records, files and individual education plans for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

I met with six governors, including the chair of governors. I held a meeting with one of Shropshire's local authority advisers.