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Mrs Claire Hill  
Headteacher  
St Barnabas CofE Primary School  
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Bristol  
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Dear Mrs Hill

### **Short inspection of St Barnabas CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 May 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 October 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have been relentless in their pursuit of further improvements. Two years ago, you joined the school as headteacher. Since then, you have shown the school community that you have a steely determination and a transparent ambition to ensure that this school is the very best it can be. Many aspects of school life have been reviewed and improved. Clear systems and high expectations permeate the school. You have been unafraid to tackle challenges and staff are held firmly to account for the progress that their pupils make. You are also particularly successful at matching the skills your staff have to areas of the school's work for them to develop. By ensuring that you have the right people doing the right things, you have built a team around you who share your drive and enthusiasm.

Your pupils thrive on this positive, aspirational approach. Every parent or carer who responded to the online survey, Parent View, reported that their child is happy in school. The overwhelming majority also said that they would recommend the school to others. A typical comment from parents was, 'My child can't wait to get here every day. She skips to school, happy and keen.'

As confident young learners, pupils are ambitious for themselves and supportive of each other. Pupils really enjoy their time in the special research room, which you and your team have developed. The SOLE (Self Organised Learning Environment) project is a good example of your drive to go beyond usual classroom learning in

order to provide pupils with opportunities to develop their own learning habits and to think for themselves. You and your team are instilling a passion for learning that pupils find infectious. St Barnabas is well placed to continue to improve even further under your vision of 'aspire, believe, together achieve'.

Pupils' achievement in writing was a key priority highlighted during the previous inspection. You have secured a new leader to oversee the improvements in writing. Pupils across the school have an increasingly solid knowledge of their use of words and the organisation of sentences. Rich, fun texts are shared with pupils. They really enjoy these and want to learn more about them. This use of good-quality writing is not only helping pupils to develop a wide vocabulary, it also inspires them to want to write for themselves. There are many examples of pupils' beautifully presented writing displayed around the school.

Teachers have been effective in ensuring that pupils have secure writing skills, and this is seen in pupils' books across the school. However, you and your leadership team are certainly not complacent. You recognise that pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, could achieve even higher standards in writing across a wider range of subjects.

You have also led improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. Teachers show strong subject knowledge as they confidently show pupils different ways of solving problems. Pupils are supported well to have a go themselves and they are confident to do so. You recognise that the most able pupils could sometimes move on to more challenging work more quickly.

You chose reading as a focus to improve for the school this year. Each year group now has a list of quality books, 'a reading spine', that pupils choose from as part of their reading choices. Teachers use a wide range of questions so that pupils can 'read it, link it and explain it'. They do so with enthusiasm. You ensure that teaching, learning and assessment constantly develop and improve so that pupils are able to make the best possible progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team, under your guidance, has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. As the designated lead for safeguarding, you ensure that all staff are well informed about the latest safeguarding guidance and that all training is up to date. You constantly review procedures and look for ways to improve them even further.

A recent improvement to provision outside for playtimes allows pupils to learn to manage risk through their exposure to a wide range of scrap materials. Pupils explore these with great enthusiasm and creativity.

There is a culture of vigilance and safety. Staff know pupils very well and are confident to report any concerns they may have to the designated safeguarding lead. You work effectively with external agencies to ensure that everything is being

done to safeguard children and minimise risk. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school.

### **Inspection findings**

- We agreed some key lines of enquiry to follow during the inspection, the first being to explore the quality of teaching and whether expectations are high enough across the school.
- You have ensured that staff are clear about how to provide good-quality teaching and learning across a wide range of subjects. A consistent, agreed set of strategies is evident across the school. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and to be curious. As a result, teaching is consistently good. Pupils are interested in their learning and enjoy the activities. We agreed that sometimes the most able pupils do not have the challenge they need in order to deepen their thinking and understanding.
- The second line of enquiry concerned attendance, particularly the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have secured time from a family link worker who is working very effectively with families in order to improve the attendance of such pupils. Attendance for many of these pupils is rapidly improving.
- Our third line of enquiry was about the progress that pupils make, particularly those in Year 2, those who are most able and those who are disadvantaged. Outcomes for some pupils in Year 2 in 2016 were low in reading and writing, particularly for the most able pupils and for disadvantaged pupils. You have ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has improved rapidly. Current pupils in Year 2, including the most able pupils, are making strong progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils across the school are also making better progress. Leaders acknowledge that work needs to continue to ensure these pupils reach even higher standards.
- Pupils' books show that many pupils have the handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar skills they need to write well. There are limited examples, however, of pupils using these skills to write in a range of subjects.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan activities that allow pupils to use their reading, writing and mathematics skills across subjects in order to deepen their understanding
- the quality of teaching continues to improve so that pupils make consistently strong progress, particularly the most able and those who are disadvantaged.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Diocese of Bristol, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your senior leadership team and other staff members. I also met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative from the local authority. There were 59 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Responses to the online staff survey were also considered.

We visited classes together to observe pupils' learning. We looked at pupils' books. I scrutinised a wide range of school documentation linked to attendance, safeguarding and behaviour. I spoke to pupils and observed their play outside during breaktimes.