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26 February 2016

Mr Steve Lunt  
Principal  
Church Stretton School  
Shrewsbury Road  
Church Stretton  
Shropshire  
SY6 6EX

Dear Mr Lunt

### **Short inspection of Church Stretton School**

Following my visit with Derek Barnes, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4 February 2016, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2012.

Since the last inspection, the school has become an academy and is part of the South Shropshire Academy Trust.

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

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

The previous inspection report praised the pupils' positive relationships and good behaviour and conduct. The report also identified high quality of teaching. Strong and effective leadership of the school were also recognised. These features continue to be of a very high quality.

However, the previous inspection report directed the school to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to enable all groups of pupils to make rapid and sustained progress. It recommended that the school should achieve this through more challenging activities in lessons and extending pupils' thinking and understanding using wider questioning. Since the last inspection, leaders in the school have addressed these areas effectively. For example, more teaching is now judged by you as good or outstanding as a result of rigorous monitoring and effective professional development. Middle leaders play an increased role in monitoring teaching, learning and assessment and they are accountable for

performance in their areas of responsibility. As a result of these and other improvements, most current pupils in most subjects at both key stages are making good progress.

Leaders have created a culture of high expectations about teaching quality, pupil achievement and behaviour. Staff and parents are supportive of the actions you take to further improve the school. Your mission of 'achievement for all' permeates the way staff work, and all pupils are well known, cared for and challenged to succeed. The interest and delight taken in the achievement of former pupils is demonstrated through the 'celebrating success' board. This display is a testament to the care and pride that staff in all roles place in their work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, your leadership team and governors make sure that appropriate systems and procedures are in place to ensure the safety of pupils. For example, thorough and rigorous vetting procedures take place when staff are recruited, resulting in a comprehensive record of appropriate checks on all adults who work at the school. Staff have been appropriately trained in child protection and safeguarding issues. As a result, all staff understand their safeguarding duties.

You make sure pupils understand potential risks and dangers. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their peers safe. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. Pupils are confident that, should they speak to a member of staff, they will be taken seriously and the issue will be dealt with. Parents feel that their children are well cared for and safe when at school. However, a small number of older pupils at the school have adopted unhealthy lifestyles as they smoke. Strategies and support for these pupils have yet to take full effect.

### **Inspection findings**

- The standards achieved by pupils who join the school in Year 7 are either broadly similar to or better than average. From these starting points, pupils make good progress. This is reflected in the above-average standards they reach at GCSE. The proportion of pupils who achieved the English Baccalaureate at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015 compares favourably with all pupils nationally.
- The proportion of most-able pupils achieving at least five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, in 2015 was higher than the national average. The most-able pupils in the school achieved GCSE grades in excess of similar pupils nationally in a range of subjects.
- In 2015, just over two thirds of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 had made at least the progress that they should in English and mathematics as a result of consistently good teaching. Over a quarter of pupils made more than the

progress expected of them. However, only one third of disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 made the progress they should.

- Leaders have taken effective action to narrow the gap between the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils in the school and nationally. Information you provided about pupils currently in the school shows that gaps in the rates of progress between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally are narrowing considerably across almost all subjects and in all year groups. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who make more than the progress expected of them remains lower than for other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Leaders have robust systems to collect information about the achievement of pupils in the school. All staff know how well pupils are doing because the progress information collected is highly accurate. Staff meet regularly to discuss pupils' progress and identify ways to support pupils who are falling behind. For example, the pupil premium mentor ensures disadvantaged pupils benefit from additional tuition in English and mathematics when it is required.
- Leaders ensure parents receive and understand key information about current changes in the way qualifications are graded. Parents say that they receive valuable information from the school about their child's progress.
- Teachers provide first-rate opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally throughout the curriculum. Fundamental British values are comprehensively and successfully promoted throughout the school. As a result, pupils are interested in the diversity of modern Britain outside what one pupil described as the 'Stretton bubble'.
- School records show that effective professional development and well-structured monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have brought about further improvements to the quality of teaching. As a result, almost all teaching is now at least good.
- Teachers use questioning successfully in lessons to develop pupils' understanding. Teachers think carefully about how to pitch their questions so that pupils are made to think hard and use what they know. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher's skilful questioning prompted more detailed responses from pupils. This encouraged pupils to think more deeply and use their existing mathematical knowledge to solve a challenging problem.
- Teachers provide valuable written feedback and specific guidance that helps pupils to improve their work. Work in pupils' books indicates how well this supports and promotes their progress. However, some teachers are inconsistent in their application of the school's marking and feedback policy.
- Attendance is high for most pupils. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has not previously been high enough. Effective actions including improved engagement with the parents of disadvantaged pupils and frequent analysis of attendance information have led to a reduction in absence rates among these pupils this year.

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school site is excellent. One pupil commented that, 'We all get on well with each other here'. The school has effective systems in place to monitor and analyse patterns of behaviour. Behaviour systems have been revised, resulting in clearly defined roles and expectations for teachers, pastoral leaders and senior leaders.
- Leaders evaluate the school accurately using information from a variety of sources. The school's self-evaluation is commendable in its succinctness and in its focus on key priorities. The judgements indicate the clear views leaders have of how well the school is doing and what needs to improve further in order for it to become outstanding.
- Good practice in teaching and leadership is shared within the South Shropshire Academy Trust. Teachers gain from shared professional development opportunities. Pupils' transition from primary school is smoother and more effective as a result of closer links between primary and secondary phases.
- Governors are committed to maintaining the strengths of the school and its culture and ethos. Governing body committees have been restructured, resulting in greater clarity of roles and responsibilities for local governors and trustees. As a consequence of restructuring, governors now make better use of meeting time to ask challenging questions of leaders and hold them to account.

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

Leaders and governors should ensure that the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally continues to reduce, especially for pupils making more than the progress expected of them.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Local Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we met you and other senior leaders, including the designated lead for safeguarding in the school. I met with the Chair of the Local Governing Body. Pupils gave inspectors their views on the school when they spoke

to us in lessons and around the academy site at break and lunchtime. We also considered the views of pupils through the 18 responses to the online questionnaire and a pupil survey you had carried out. We joined you and another senior leader in short visits to lessons where we spoke to pupils about their work and looked at their work in books. We spoke to school staff and also took their views into account through the 46 responses to an inspection questionnaire for academy staff. The views of parents were considered through the 85 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors evaluated recent information on pupils' progress and scrutinised other records about keeping pupils safe, their attendance and punctuality, and their behaviour.