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Dan Browning
Executive principal
St John's School
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Dear Mr Browning

Short inspection of St John's School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017 with Richard Light, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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.

Leaders and the school governance committee have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, senior leaders and governors are passionate about the school and deeply committed to its continued improvement. You use your good understanding of the school's strengths and weakness to drive whole-school priorities with determination. Leaders' work continues to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the school and ensures that staff, including middle leaders, are clear about senior leaders' expectations. Middle leaders benefit from the high-quality professional development provided for them. They understand their role in providing a high standard of education for all pupils.

Since the time of the last inspection the links between St John's School and King Richard's School have been further enhanced. You lead both schools as executive principal well, and a single senior leadership team supports you effectively. There is no doubt that the changes made have strengthened the quality of leadership and provision at St John's.

Parents and pupils appreciate the unique, extra-curricular activities which the school provides for pupils, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Pupils achieve well academically and develop the strong personal attributes that will stand them in good stead for their next steps in their education, training or employment. Pupils say that the best thing about the school is that everyone is known and supported in their personal choices. Staff are proud to work at the school and recognise that the

recent improvements continue to improve the quality of education at the school. Everyone feels part of the welcoming and aspirational community.

In 2016, overall pupils made significantly more progress than other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 4. This was the case in a number of subjects, including mathematics and modern foreign languages. However, pupils' progress in English was not as strong, being broadly in line with that of other pupils nationally. Support commissioned from external consultants led to changes to the English curriculum from Year 7 upwards at the school. The school's chosen approach focuses on examination preparation and success, and this is reflected in the school's published examination results. As a result, pupils become successful in passing examinations but gaps remain in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Work seen in some pupils' books lacks the breadth and variety of appropriate subject content needed to fully meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

Leaders support the most able pupils by providing them with bespoke curriculum options so that they can take additional subjects or examinations early. However, not all teachers are providing the most able pupils with sufficient challenge or giving them regular activities to stretch their thinking or deepen their conceptual understanding. The most able pupils are therefore not achieving the high standards that they could in all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. An extended safeguarding team works collaboratively under the leadership of a highly knowledgeable and well-informed senior leader and rightly makes pupils' safety its highest priority. Team members are all suitably trained and keep their knowledge current through regular updates. You commission external audits to check that safeguarding arrangements continue to be robust. All statutory checks on staff are carried out and recorded carefully. Records are detailed and of high quality. They reflect the determination and tenacity of staff to ensure the best provision and care for pupils. Leaders put in place effective early care for pupils to prevent problems from escalating. They work with external agencies, including the army welfare service, to provide additional support for pupils and their families when needed and ensure that any referrals are dealt with promptly and thoroughly. All staff receive regular and appropriate training and demonstrate a good understanding of their responsibilities to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe because aspects of safety feature in the curriculum. Activities ensure that pupils know the risks associated with online safety, such as through texting or the use of social media. Pupils report that they feel safe in school; a view that is strongly supported by parents.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we agreed, with your senior leadership team, to explore how effectively the most able pupils are challenged. Together, we examined

pupils' progress and attainment in English and reviewed the school's new assessment system. Finally, we investigated the impact of leaders' work on sixth form provision.

- When I met with the school governance committee to discuss the agreed inspection focus it was apparent from their responses that they provide the school with effective support and challenge. They use their knowledge of the military community, which the school serves, to ensure that pupils and their families are well supported and safe. They undertake training regularly to help them fulfil their role with rigour and passion.
- Support commissioned from MOD schools has been effective in helping leaders to drive whole-school priorities and to evaluate the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes; for example, the revisions to the English curriculum.
- Leaders maintain a close focus on teaching and learning to reflect the school's commitment to continuous improvement. Access to a variety of training for staff through links with other schools, both in Cyprus and England, and professional educational organisations, is helping staff to keep up to date with current practice. Your determination to remain outward-facing, so that you can learn from best practice, is supporting further improvements to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Teaching and learning and the curriculum in humanities is strong. Teachers build on pupils' prior knowledge to deepen their understanding well. For example, pupils in Year 8 show a deep understanding of significant events in British and American history when analysing historical sources. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they enjoy lessons in humanities and feel challenged to do their best.
- During our joint visits to lessons, we saw that the most able pupils were not routinely challenged to meet the very high standards which they are capable of reaching. While it was evident that pupils produce a lot of work, the planned activities did not sufficiently develop their knowledge or deeper conceptual understanding.
- Leaders have refined the school's assessment system to monitor pupils' attainment and progress effectively from Year 7. All pupils who spoke to inspectors in key stage 3 understood the system and what they needed to do to improve their work. Not all staff are confident yet in the new assessment measures for English at key stage 4. At times, work is not matched appropriately to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. In addition, some confusion remains as to the accuracy of assessment information provided to leaders.
- There are inconsistencies in the assessment of pupils' English work, particularly in Year 10. Pupils' books showed a predominance of literature, especially poetry, at the expense of English language. This means that pupils are not making the progress which they could in English.
- The new leader in the sixth form has successfully raised expectations and standards. As a result, students' attendance has improved and they make good progress. Students receive good information and advice on their options after

sixth form, which enables them to make informed choices about the next steps in their education or employment.

- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, would recommend the school to others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum and assessment in English are improved, particularly at key stage 4
- the most able pupils are appropriately challenged in lessons.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the school governance committee and the Senior Principal for Children and Young People, MOD. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection meetings were held with you, senior and middle leaders and representatives from the school governance committee, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to the inspector adviser who supports the school. Inspectors also spoke with pupils in key stages 3 and 4 about their school experience. Inspectors visited a range of lessons across different year groups and subjects; all were seen jointly with senior leaders. During these visits, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of their learning. The inspection team scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records including the single central register (the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff). Inspectors evaluated the school's documentation in relation to pupils' performance, improvement planning and teaching and learning. Inspectors took account of the 137 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, the 39 responses to the Ofsted free-text service, the 48 responses to the staff survey and the 27 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey.