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Headteacher: Mr Iain Horner

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Dear Parents and Carers,

As you know, our school was inspected by Ofsted on 7th and 8th March 2023 and, on behalf of the Leadership Team and Governors, I am pleased to tell you that '**Chesterton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School continues to be a Good School**'.

As you are probably aware, our previous inspection took place in March 2017, when the school was also judged to be 'Good'. However, both the school and the Ofsted framework have changed significantly since then, and expectations have never been higher. Therefore, retaining our rating of 'Good' is very pleasing and validates the self-assessment of the Leadership Team and Governing Body. In recent times, for obvious reasons, it has been harder than ever to maintain the rich and varied experience that we value so highly at Chesterton. Therefore, we were very proud that the inspection recognised strengths across a wide range of areas, both from within the curriculum and beyond.

I have included some of the highlights below.

Staff have high expectations. Around the school, pupils behave calmly and respectfully towards each other. Pupils play in cooperative and kind ways and are clear about the school's rules and systems to support behaviour and conduct, such as the school's 'house system' and 'traffic lights'.

Leaders and staff know pupils very well. They form close relationships and are well supported through extensive pastoral support that is on offer.

Pupils learn about democracy and enjoy responsibilities such as 'School Councillor', 'Eco Councillor' and 'Sports Captain'. One pupil said, 'We do things here that when we leave, we will look back at and remember.'

One pupil said, 'You might not like sport before you join our school but by the time you leave you will love it!'

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Leaders have developed clear, sequenced, well-planned curriculums that prepare pupils well for their next stage of education. In subjects such as geography, key knowledge that pupils need to know has been mapped out, including subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers understand how to link that knowledge across lessons, and how to help pupils understand and remember the things they need to.

Pupils begin learning phonics from the start of their time in Reception and most pupils progress well through the scheme. If any pupil falls behind, staff recognise this and provide extra support to help them catch up. Staff choose rich, engaging texts to share with pupils that help to weave the curriculum together and make learning memorable.

In mathematics, including in the early years, staff make good use of the training that is provided for them. Staff are very confident in their use of vocabulary and how to support pupils in developing their mathematical understanding.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciate the efforts of the whole school community. One parent said, 'We have been and continue to be delighted with this friendly school for our children. Staff are united in going the extra mile to support families as well as the children and we feel part of a community where we are cared for and nurtured.'

Although, on the face of it, we have not 'moved up' on the Ofsted rating system (Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Good, Outstanding), there is a considerable range covering the 'Good' bracket and we feel that the school has certainly made significant progress within that rating over the past six years.

You may wonder why we are not an 'Outstanding' school. This is complex question. In short, the benchmark to be Outstanding under the current Ofsted framework is extremely high and, at this point in time, we would have been wrong to assess ourselves as meeting those criteria. To give you some context, of the 58 primary inspections that have been reported so far in 2022/23, only 5 have resulted in an 'Outstanding' judgement, none of which are in our local area.

As I said at the time of the last inspection, our motivation has not, and will not, come from external validation. I can assure you that the whole staff team is dedicated to providing the best possible education that we can for our whole school community for the good of our pupils and their families. It is that commitment that will continue to drive all of our efforts.

You will not have been able to escape the media coverage surrounding Ofsted in recent weeks, with the tragic news about a headteacher not too far from here taking their own life following a negative inspection judgement, breaking just after our visit. Whilst I must say that our inspector did their best to make the process as smooth as possible, and was polite, amenable and professional throughout, there is no doubt that the wider inspection regime, particularly the pressure that builds up in advance of a visit, places a huge strain on all those working in schools. Therefore, I would like to place on record my enormous thanks to the whole team, who pulled together, not just during the inspection itself, but in the weeks, months and years leading up to it to ease some of that pressure. These efforts, from support staff, office staff, teaching staff, governors, and even visiting university students, also allowed us all to make sure that the inspector was given a true impression of the best that Chesterton has to offer.

I would also like to wholeheartedly thank you all for your valuable support during the inspection, particularly those who filled in the online Parent View questionnaire or spoke to the inspector in person. Our staff were genuinely touched by the kind messages that were received and delighted to see that parents, carers and pupils value Chesterton so highly.

A copy of the full report is attached and will also available on the school website. At some point next week, the report will be published on the Ofsted website.

Kind regards,

Mr I. Horner - Headteacher

