

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Victoria Voller
Headteacher
Shere CofE Aided Infant School
Shere
Guildford
Surrey
GU5 9HB

Dear Mrs Voller

Short inspection of Shere CofE Aided Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 1 December 2015, 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school remains at the heart of the local community, with well established links to the church, local businesses and residents. Leaders have continued to promote well the Christian values which underpin the school's heritage and daily life, resulting in excellent care for each pupil. Adults in school model self-respect and courtesy for others at all times. Pupils follow this example. They wear their uniform with pride, work hard and take care in the presentation of their work. Their behaviour towards staff and one another is good. A dedicated team of staff work well together and, as a result, pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. Parents are delighted with the family ethos of this small school, the individual attention their children receive and the ready availability of staff. Some parents expressed their pleasure at how well prepared their older children have been for the move to junior school and the challenges and opportunities that brings.

Since joining the school in September 2015, you have quickly won the respect and trust of the whole school community. Your swift and accurate analysis of the school's continuing strengths and key areas for improvement has re-energised staff and governors. Your expertise and clear communication, your thoughtful consideration of others' views and your respect for the school's established strengths rightly inspire confidence in your leadership.

At the time of the last inspection, the inspector recognised the many strengths of the school. These included the positive learning environment and excellent relationships with and good support from parents, as well as ensuring children's good attendance. Furthermore, the inspector recognised that pupils made good progress as a result of engaging teaching and accurate assessments. At the same time, the inspector identified a need for teachers to use questions more precisely to develop pupils' thinking and to ensure that pupils became more involved in assessing and improving their own work. Leaders addressed these areas effectively, so that:

- teachers regularly encourage pupils to talk about their learning during lessons, with adults and with pupil partners, helping to develop pupils' language and thinking
- teachers' feedback to pupils about their work is now more effective in helping them improve.

Inspectors also identified the need for teachers to be more involved in improving teaching across the school and in leading areas of the curriculum. Some opportunities of this kind were provided for a time after the last inspection, but have not been sustained.

You and the governors are not complacent. You have identified the correct priorities for further improvement and are taking the right action, without delay, to address them. You know that more needs to be done to ensure that teaching improves further so that all pupils make the best possible progress, particularly those who require extra support to learn well. You are aware that the curriculum should be enriched further to ensure that pupils are really well prepared for life in modern Britain, and that teachers should have more opportunities to lead improvement across the school. Governors have an increasingly accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for continuing improvement, thanks to your helpful reports and those from the local authority. However, the governors' role in evaluating for themselves how well aspects of the school are improving is not clear. You are right to be concerned that, despite your best efforts, and those of governors, some parents do not currently ensure the full attendance of their children at school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school is a very safe place where pupils are cared for well. Safeguarding procedures are well established, and the security and health and safety of the site are conscientiously maintained. The school's safeguarding and child protection policies are comprehensive, with relevant training about new requirements provided promptly to staff and governors. Staff are alert to signs of harm, and the school works well with external agencies when necessary. The risk of bullying is minimised through high expectations of pupils' behaviour, supported by attentive supervision, including in the playground. Pupils told me that adults help to solve any problems reported to them. Children are taught in ways appropriate for their age about how to keep safe.

Inspection findings

- You quickly established, on your arrival, an accurate picture of the school's continuing strengths and key areas for improvement. Consulting closely with staff, governors, pupils and parents, you have taken effective steps to refresh the school's vision. A newly energised focus on every pupil achieving the best possible learning is already impacting positively on teaching and the further development of leadership capacity among staff.
- You have allocated clear responsibilities to each teacher to check and develop the quality of teaching in specific areas of the curriculum and to evaluate pupils' achievement. The continuing improvement of teaching and learning is now firmly linked to teachers' performance management.
- Aligned to teachers' new responsibilities, you have arranged relevant training, for example in analysing pupils' achievement. Teachers are also accessing training beyond the school through the local network of schools and a nationally accredited leadership programme.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils enjoy success during lessons and work hard. Pupils therefore make good progress through Year 1 and Year 2. However, for a small minority of pupils, misconceptions during lessons are not always identified and resolved promptly, particularly in phonics (letters and the sounds they make). In addition, staff interventions designed to accelerate pupils' progress in reading are not always successful.
- Achievement among pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals or looked after) has improved, especially in writing and mathematics. However, these pupils still lag behind other pupils in reading.
- Pupils' learning is regularly enriched by visits to the local church, shops and amenities. Pupils' experience of life in the wider United Kingdom is, however, more limited. Firm plans are in place from January for pupils to study a wider range of history, geography, society and culture, through whole-school topics. The first theme is planned to be 'castles', fostering links to the history of local families, and beyond this, to national ideas of monarchy and leadership. The prospect of this new approach is inspiring staff.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is a strength of the school, supported well through the good example of staff and deep-rooted links with the local church and clergy. Pupils take an active part in meaningful community events such as harvest festival and remembrance. The well-established 'forest school' programme teaches pupils to respect the natural environment and to wonder at its beauty.
- Pupils are cared for well. Safeguarding procedures are secure; adult supervision is attentive and supportive. Parents know from experience that staff will listen readily to any concerns and will respond appropriately.
- Pupils behave well. They share and cooperate well in lessons and at social times, care well for one another and show respect to the adults. Adults provide a good example in their own relationships, ensuring a calm and purposeful environment in which pupils settle and learn well. Clearly stated values of responsibility,

happiness, compassion, honesty, justice and respect underpin the school's vision, promoting well the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and freedom of speech. Through the school council, pupils contribute to decisions about the smooth running of the school.

- After reviewing their effectiveness, governors have sensibly extended their membership to include new members with appropriate expertise. The link governor ensures that governors attend relevant training. However, the governors' role in checking the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes is not clear enough.
- You value highly the support provided by the local authority for your induction, including the validation of your analysis of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.
- Early years provision is a strength of the school. Children enter Reception with wide-ranging levels of learning. Children make good progress, so that by the end of Reception Year the proportion who attain a good level of development is higher than the national figure. Adults care well for the children and support their learning effectively by engaging them in meaningful dialogue during activities. Effective use is made of the environment inside and outside to promote good learning in all the areas of the early years curriculum. Parents appreciate the good information they receive when children join the school, and about class activities and children's progress as the year continues.
- The attendance of some pupils is undermined by unauthorised holidays taken in term time, despite the best efforts of you and governors to remedy this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teaching continues to improve, so that pupils' misconceptions are quickly picked up in lessons, especially in phonics, and that reading interventions are more successful
- the school's improvement plans engage teachers more fully in driving improvement and show clearly how governors will check and evaluate the impact leaders' actions have on pupils' outcomes
- efforts are redoubled to eliminate unauthorised absences as a result of pupils taking holidays in term time.

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for further improvement. We visited all the classrooms together to observe teaching of phonics, writing and mathematics. We looked at pupils' work in books and on display and at teachers' written feedback to pupils about their work. I spoke with parents in the playground at the start of the day and considered the 31 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View. I also took account of the school's own survey of parents. I talked with pupils during lessons and at playtime, visited the breakfast club and read the 16 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. I met with some members of staff and considered the nine responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and three returned in person. I held meetings with governors and representatives of the local authority and diocese. I examined a range of documents, including information about teaching and pupils' achievement, the school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plan, governing body records, information about pupils' attendance and behaviour, and safeguarding checks and policies.