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Mr Mark Millinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Millinson

Short inspection of All Saints Interchurch Academy

Following my visit to the school on 3 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 the predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. All Saints Interchurch Academy is a very positive and purposeful place to learn, underpinned by strong Christian values that pervade the school. You have inspired staff, pupils, parents and carers since joining the school in September 2014. Your approachability, enthusiasm and faith combine to provide a caring and supportive environment that is bringing out the best in staff and pupils. All who are part of this school community are very proud of the school and its achievements. However, you rightly acknowledge that although some teaching is outstanding, it is not consistently so for pupils to reach still higher standards. This is also reflected in the views of parents and carers which, although extremely positive and supportive, noted some variation in pupils' progress. Effective work across the school to improve provision provides a strong foundation for further development.

At the previous inspection, inspectors were positive about most teaching. However, teacher's introductions to lessons and explanations to pupils were sometimes too long. The pace of learning was not brisk enough in all lessons. The school's work to raise the quality of teaching and learning is evident:

- Teachers prepare a wide range of interesting activities tailored to the needs of different groups of pupils. As a result, pupils are motivated learners who make good progress in lessons and over time.
- English and mathematics leaders are providing exemplary teaching in their subjects. Opportunities for them to monitor the work of other teachers and support their development are being used to good effect.

- The introduction of a new tracking system to monitor pupils' progress is helping to raise expectations of pupils. Any underachievement is being addressed quickly through strong teamwork by teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils are receiving better feedback from their teachers, which is helping them to correct mistakes or overcome any misconceptions. There are plentiful examples in the top class of pupils deepening their understanding as a result.
- Skilful management of resources, including staffing, is enabling pupils whose achievement has previously dipped, to catch up. This work is supported by visiting teachers and volunteers who enrich pupils' experiences.

Senior leaders, governors and the officers from both dioceses have an accurate view of what is working well and what could be better still. Monitoring is strongly focused on pupils' engagement and achievement. Strong planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes to topics that promote pupils' curiosity and develop their interest. In addition, special curriculum weeks provide a focus for different subjects such as science. This gives middle leaders good opportunities to promote key skills that contribute to pupils' success in particular subjects. Clarity about what pupils should learn is particularly successful in mathematics, where staff regularly share success criteria with pupils. This means that assessments are embedded in pupils' learning and they make consistently good progress as a result. Although all subjects are not as far developed, mathematics provides a good model of subject leadership to develop across the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements. Leaders and governors ensure that staff are well informed about new guidance. Refresher training is planned for teachers, teaching assistants, support staff and governors later this month. The lead professionals liaise with staff, parents, carers and external agencies to ensure that child protection is secure. The governing body monitors the school's safeguarding and ensures that information on the school's website is compliant. Appropriate checks are made when adults join the school. Safeguarding procedures are focused clearly on minimising risks to pupils at the school, at extended provision or when pupils make educational visits. Pupils, parents and carers feel that safety is well managed and is supported by clear rules and responsibilities, good relationships and positive behaviour. However, around a third of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, did not know if the school is effective in dealing with bullying. The school council is well informed about different forms of bullying and the school's work to promote anti-bullying. Work to inform pupils, parents and carers has helped to raise awareness of the dangers of cyber-bullying. Staff maximise opportunities to teach pupils about safety. This was evident in a science lesson about electricity. A topic about the Great Fire of London involved a talk by a fireman, followed by pupils producing safety posters about fire risks.

Inspection findings

Leadership and management

- Leaders and governors demonstrate high expectations of pupils' achievement. The school's new system of tracking pupils' progress shows that targets are suitably raised as they reach the next stage of their learning.
- The school's mission is strongly reflected in school life. These are to: pursue excellence in teaching and learning; challenge pupils to reach their potential; nurture spirituality, respect for self and others; and inspire values for life.
- Senior and middle leaders lead by example. There are strong role models to promote further improvement in teaching, learning and assessment. This includes examples of effective subject leadership.
- The morale of teachers and support staff is high. All of those that responded to Ofsted's questionnaire were proud to work at the school, rated leadership and management highly and felt clear about the aims they are expected to achieve.
- Parents and carers are full of praise for the headteacher. They have every confidence in his leadership and feel that his knowledge of the pupils and concern for their well-being contributes to the family ethos of the school.
- Around a quarter of parents who responded to Parent View would like better information about their child's progress. The school's new system of tracking pupils' progress has not yet been used as a basis for reporting to parents.
- The governing body provides a high level of support and challenge. Governors' skills, for example in business, are deployed effectively. Link roles are used well to find out about the school. Restructuring has led to greater efficiency.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Available resources are used judiciously to address weaker areas. This includes staffing and the roles and responsibilities that teachers are given.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that engages pupils. Exciting visits and special projects are highlights. For example, in science week 'colour chaos' includes visiting science professors and experiments in art.
- Additional funding is used very effectively to help disadvantaged pupils catch up. Individual support that begins as soon as pupils start at the school and the good attention given to equality of opportunity are contributory factors.
- The school's priorities are the right ones. Following a dip in standards in writing, staff are strongly focused on improving pupils' writing skills. Leaders are using information about pupils' progress to address underachievement earlier.

Teaching, learning and assessment

- Displays of pupils' work around the school and in classrooms are carefully presented and motivate pupils to do well. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher used her display skilfully to reinforce pupils' previous learning about fractions.
- Staff design and use resources effectively to aid pupils' learning. For example, pupils' writing is improving through the use of word banks. These helped pupils widen their vocabulary when writing about fossils, following a visit.

- Teachers and teaching assistants work collaboratively to support pupils' learning. For example, while teachers lead discussions the teaching assistants often record pupils' answers. This is helping to assess pupils' understanding.
- Teachers explain the purpose of learning clearly to pupils. Success criteria are particularly well used in mathematics. This makes the stages of learning explicit to pupils and contributes to effective assessment.
- The teaching of handwriting is having a significant impact on the pride pupils show in their work. Although the older pupils did not benefit from this approach earlier in the school they are trying to improve presentation too, as are staff.
- Conscientious feedback and marking is helping pupils to improve their work. This includes grammar, punctuation and spelling used in the context of other subjects. As a result, pupils consistently do well when these skills are tested.
- There are good routines established in class to ensure that pupils learn to use time precisely. This includes the Early Years Foundation Stage where the children move between different activities quickly and purposefully.
- Teachers' planning does not always include enough consideration of different stages in lessons. For example, time for pupils to work individually or in pairs is not interspersed often enough with teaching designed to move learning on.
- Adults with specialist skills add to the quality of pupils' learning. This includes very impressive singing taught by a peripatetic music teacher, a coach promoting competitive sports and gardening club led by a talented parent.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- Pupils are keen to learn. They are attentive when listening to their teachers and thoughtful when answering questions. They are able to explain their work clearly and understand what is expected of them.
- The school council, representing classes from Years 1 to 6, said that pupils like the school because 'we learn in every lesson we have'. Pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning. They settle into lessons very quickly.
- Pupils show that they are able to take responsibility when leading events such as assemblies. However, opportunities to work unaided are not always as purposeful. There are few activities organised by older pupils at breaktimes.
- Pupils appreciate the sense of community promoted by staff. For example, they value opportunities on special curriculum days to work with pupils in other years, including other members of their family or church.
- The school's procedures to keep them safe reassure the pupils. They know who to turn to should they have any concerns. This is reflected in strong parental confidence that their child feels safe at the school.

Outcomes

- Pupils get off to a good start in Reception. The proportion achieving a good level of development is above average. This is reflected in current work and records of children's achievements. However, girls do better than boys.

- Standards in phonics are rising with an above average proportion achieving the expected standard in 2015. Staff regularly reinforce pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters make across a range of subjects.
- Outcomes are above average in mathematics, reading, English grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, the school is sharply focused on improving pupils' writing in order to reach the higher levels pupils attain in mathematics.
- Different groups of pupils make progress in line with their peers. This includes pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Disadvantaged pupils sometimes outperform their peers.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education when they leave the school in Year 6. Nevertheless, fluctuations in pupils' progress as they move through the school have limited higher achievement still in the past. Current monitoring and pupils' work indicates that good progress is being maintained.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the strong subject leadership that exists in subjects such as mathematics, English and religious education is extended to all subjects
- pupils make continuous progress across their subjects as a result of teaching, learning and assessment that is consistently strong
- teachers and teaching assistants link different learning activities carefully so that pupils are able to work equally productively when unaided by an adult
- parents and carers receive additional information from the school's new progress tracking in order to fully support their child's progress.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Her Majesty's Inspector scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection. Meetings were held with school leaders, representatives of the governing body, staff and parents and carers. Telephone discussions were held with representatives of the Ely Diocese and the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia. The inspection involved meetings with groups of pupils formally and informally and scrutiny of their work. All classes were observed jointly with senior leaders. An assembly led by Year 3 pupils was observed. Additional documentation was analysed, including reports to governors, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, and information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and welfare. The inspector discussed the school with parents in meetings and in the playground, analysed 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), 17 freetext messages and nine responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.