

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



18 March 2016

Michelle Green
Headteacher
Little Missenden Church of England School
Little Missenden
Amersham
Buckinghamshire
HP7 0RA

Dear Mrs Green

Short inspection of Little Missenden Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 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 school was judged to be good in March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils continue to achieve well. Most reach the standards expected for their age at the end of Key Stage 1. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the early years has been above the national average for the last three years. The very large majority of pupils meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they make) check.

Since joining the school in September 2014, you have had a demonstrable impact. You are determined to improve the school and act quickly on advice, doing all that you can for the pupils in your care. You have taken important steps to realise your aim for all pupils to receive the best education possible. For example, the quality of teaching has improved. Governors are equally ambitious and have supported you in driving changes that have led to increases in pupils' achievement. For example, recent adaptations to the accommodation have enabled you to modify teaching arrangements. Governors have sought to find resources to increase staffing to achieve your aims. Consequently, pupils are making even better progress than in the recent past. Staff understand and share your aims because you have taken the time to build effective relationships and communicate well. As a result, staff feel valued and are happy. One member of staff reflected on the importance of this: 'Happy staff means happy pupils and a happy school'. Teamwork is central to the work of Little Missenden School.

Parents are very appreciative of the strong relationships that prevail. They value links with the church and recognise how this facilitates their child's personal development. Through the school's Christian values, pupils learn the importance of honesty, friendship, thankfulness, forgiveness, compassion and trust. Many parents are quick to comment on how their children have grown in confidence since joining the school. Pupils are friendly and are self-assured. With perfect manners, pupils are keen to explain how they support each other and build universal friendships that span all ages. Pupils all feel that adults can help them if they are worried or help resolve any friendship issues. They also know that the buddy bench is somewhere that they can go if they need to find someone to play with.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors identified two areas to improve. You have effectively addressed both of these. Governors have adopted a much more strategic role and are playing an important part in securing improvements. Pupils, including the most able, are making better progress in writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Parents and staff rightly recognise that the school provides a nurturing environment for pupils. Safeguarding is no exception. You have clear systems in place to promote pupils' safety and everyone knows what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. You maintain a culture of vigilance by adopting the view that 'it could happen here'. Recent training relating to radicalisation has led you to strengthen your resolve that your young pupils learn to respect other cultures and different points of view. Recent trips to the synagogue and the Diwali celebrations have enabled pupils to appreciate other beliefs. Indeed, all pupils feel that the school helps them to respect the backgrounds of others.

You closely monitor pupils' attendance. If a pupil has increased absence, you take swift action and sometimes involve other professionals to better support families. Governors routinely check that you take appropriate actions to promote pupils' welfare and ensure that responsibilities are met. Pupils all feel safe at school and enjoy learning how to keep themselves safe. 'Beep Beep Day' is one such popular event that teaches pupils road safety.

Inspection findings

- You have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have worked closely with an external partner to make robust judgements. This information has helped you to shape your aspirational school improvement plan. The plan is well focused on securing measurable improvements in teaching and learning. Regular evaluations show that your actions have already led to increased achievement.
- The new Chair of the Governing Body has adopted a more strategic approach, starting with an evaluation of the governing body's effectiveness. In line with your goal to achieve excellence, actions are in place to continue to develop governance. Through regular meetings, governors check the progress of the school improvement plan and provide appropriate challenge to you. As a result, governors have an accurate understanding of pupils' achievement. Governors maintain good oversight of their responsibilities and regularly audit their skills to ensure that they are well equipped to do this. Consequently, governors are effective.
- You rightly recognise the importance of sharing leadership tasks more widely. Therefore, you have given teachers some additional responsibilities. Each new leader has linked with a governor and together they have created an action plan for their area. The pairs are working closely together to check the progress of their plans. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work.
- External partners have provided you with valuable support. The diocese, advisers from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and the headteacher of Chestnut Lane School have all helped you to set up robust systems to check the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers receive helpful feedback that supports their professional development. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and pupils are all making good progress.
- You have also worked closely with partners and staff to introduce a new assessment system. Governors are closely checking this process because they know that accurate pupil progress information is essential to measure the impact of your ambitious plans. You have collected useful information about pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers record pupils' attainment in subjects such as religious education, physical education and science. However, you are not able to demonstrate the progress that pupils make in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics.

- In 2015, pupils achieved well in Key Stage 1. The proportion of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils making expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics was high compared with national averages. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in reading and mathematics was similarly high. However, fewer pupils in Year 2 made more than expected progress in writing. Boys and the most-able pupils did not achieve as highly as others. Therefore, you made changes to the curriculum and provided pupils with more opportunities to write. As a result, current pupil progress information shows that achievement in writing is rising and is closer to that in reading and mathematics. Boys and the most-able pupils are making progress that is similar to their classmates.
- Pupils write regularly and for a range of meaningful and interesting purposes. Teachers use trips to places such as a pizza restaurant and the Chiltern Open Air Museum to inspire pupils to write at greater length. Pupils also enjoy topics such as 'dinosaurs' in Year 2. The teacher used her strong subject knowledge to encourage pupils to use specific vocabulary, such as 'carnivore' and 'roam', along with rhetorical questions, to craft an engaging introduction to a non-fiction page. Homework tasks support pupils' writing and provide valuable opportunities to deepen learning. For example, Year 2 pupils used their dinosaur facts that they had recorded at home to write about Tyrannosaurus rex. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. For example, in a Year 1 class, the teacher set a demanding task that required pupils to write a simile and include an adjective. One pupil decided that he had finished before the end of the lesson. The teacher swiftly intervened, 'Can I tempt you with another? Good!'. The most-able pupils were also well challenged to expand their similes to include some extra information. Consequently, pupils' work shows that all groups are making good progress in writing.
- In the Reception Year, children are making good progress across the different areas of learning. Teachers have a strong understanding of phonics and use these skills to good effect. In a phonics lesson, children showed that they can write letters correctly to show sounds. Children also wrote their names using water to paint on the furniture outdoors. One child was able to explain why his name started with a capital letter, stating, 'It is my name, it is important'. You know that in the past, children have not made as much progress in writing as in other areas of learning and seek to provide children with more opportunities to write in the Reception Year. Recent changes to the building have only just been completed and teachers are continuing to arrange classrooms. There is a writing tent and some chinks in the outdoor area. Nevertheless, there are not enough activities to challenge children to develop their writing independently, particularly outside.

- At the last inspection, relationships with parents were a recognised strength of the school. You have sustained this vital partnership. Parents unanimously agree that the school is well led and almost all of them feel that their child receives appropriate homework for their age. Indeed, the thriving parents' association, PSALMS, is further evidence of the successful link between home and school. The association secures the necessary funds to enrich the curriculum. The funding pays for a teacher to lead outdoor learning in the Forest School, as well as a chef to provide regular cooking lessons. Members have created a garden with the pupils who are enthusiastically planting vegetables to use with the chef. Everybody appreciates the wealth of experiences on offer at the school.
- Pupils enjoy school, work diligently and consequently achieve well. In lessons, pupils concentrate and work hard. Their exercise books are neat, showing that they take pride in their work. Around the school, pupils' behaviour is impeccable. Staff, parents and pupils agree that everyone behaves well. One child rightly said, 'We are very, very, very, very good!'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more challenging activities are provided, particularly outdoors, to develop children's writing in the early years provision
- the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in writing increases
- a system to track and measure pupils' learning in subjects other than English and maths is implemented.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and considered your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I visited all three classes with you. I spoke to five parents and considered 36 responses to the online survey, Parent View. I looked at pupils' writing books, spoke with them and observed their behaviour around the school. I met with four governors and a representative of Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. You and I met to discuss safeguarding and pupils' achievement. I considered a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks. I also spoke with the headteacher of Chestnut Lane School and a representative of the parents' association.