

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



8 December 2016

Mrs Sandra Finney  
Headteacher  
Antrobus St Mark's CofE Primary School  
School Lane  
Antrobus  
Northwich  
Cheshire  
CW9 6LB

Dear Mrs Finney

### **Short inspection of Antrobus St Mark's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 July 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

There have been some changes to the context of the school since then. You were appointed as headteacher in September 2016. You are also headteacher at a nearby school. You have, appointed an experienced teacher from within Antrobus St Mark's to be deputy headteacher. She has oversight of teaching and learning and deputises in your absence. The arrangement is clearly effective, as pupils in all year groups are making strong progress.

Even though you have only been in post for a short time, you have quickly identified areas that you feel could be improved. You have taken effective action to address the small number of issues raised by recent published assessment information, such as writing in key stage 1 and phonics in Year 1.

The vast majority of parents are highly positive about the work of school leaders and staff. They described the school as an 'extremely safe' place. They felt that the atmosphere is welcoming and that their children are valued. These comments are a testament to the work that you and your staff do to create such a warm and caring learning environment.

Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They have very positive

attitudes to their learning and cannot help but show their enthusiasm. For example, some boys in the Reception class were bursting to show me the model of a 'hedgehog house' they had made. They spoke to me very articulately about what each area of the house was for and used the word 'hibernating' to tell me about how hedgehogs spend the winter. We recognised the need for further opportunities for children in the early years to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics.

At the school's previous inspection the only area for improvement was to make more teaching outstanding. While the school is not yet outstanding, teaching and learning are very effective and have resulted in strong progress and a good overall attainment. We agreed that the roles of leaders for subjects other than English and mathematics should be further developed to enable them to evaluate the impact of their actions on pupils' achievement. There were a few omissions in the information published on the school's website. The governing body should keep the website under review to ensure that it provides parents with the required information.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

While there are few recorded safeguarding issues, you and your staff are knowledgeable about the signs of abuse and the processes involved in reporting any concerns about a pupil. Staff are also aware of risks such as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The single central record of checks on staff is compliant and meets requirements. The school site is secure and there are effective controls in place for admitting visitors. Attendance is above average and has improved for disadvantaged pupils and those who have an education, health and care plan.

You and your leaders have created a safe environment for pupils. They say they feel safe because of the security measures around the site and because they know who to talk to if they have any worries. They understand the different types of bullying that can occur, but they say incidents are rare. They are confident in their teachers because they deal swiftly and effectively with any issues. Assemblies and visits from, for example, the police are used to good effect to make pupils aware of matters such as how to keep themselves safe on the internet.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are clear about the school's strengths and areas for development. You have rightly focused on improving areas that showed slippage in the published assessment information for 2016 and your actions in this connection are already having a positive effect.
- Pupils from all groups are typically making strong learning progress. The quality of writing in Year 2 is good and improving, with pupils using more sophisticated vocabulary and more complex sentence structures as they develop their skills.
- Year 1 pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in phonics in 2016 have made good progress in Year 2. The teaching of phonics to the current Year 1

pupils is effective and you anticipate that there will be a higher proportion achieving the standard in 2017.

- All children in Reception achieved a good level development in 2016, which represents an improvement on 2015. The children in the early years make good progress from their starting points, with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age. The learning environment is busy and interesting and there are many opportunities for children to develop a wide range of skills. While there are many tasks provided for pupils to develop their writing skills independently, both indoors and outdoors, there are fewer activities that encourage pupils' development of problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Pupils read well, according to their age and ability. The most able pupils read with confidence and fluency. They can use expression to convey meaning well and they can infer meanings from the context. They read suitably challenging books. Less-able readers show they can use their knowledge of phonics to help them read unfamiliar words.
- There is a very obvious sense of team spirit among your staff. They are proud to work at the school and feel that you lead it well. They say that they are clear about their roles and expectations and that there is an open culture that allows discussion and debate. Newly qualified teachers also receive good levels of support from leaders.
- You have robust systems in place to check on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. You set clear targets for the performance management of teachers and you monitor their work by observing them teaching or scrutinising their planning and their pupils' books. You make recommendations on how they can improve their teaching. All these actions have helped to sustain the good standard of teaching and learning.
- Subject leaders, particularly in English and mathematics, have a good overview of their subjects and are always looking to find ways to make improvements. Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics devise action plans and regularly monitor the quality of the teaching and learning. They do not, however, consistently focus their actions on pupils' achievement or evaluate their impact.
- Governors are passionate about securing success for the school and have the welfare of pupils at heart. They have good awareness of safeguarding issues and they undertake regular training. They hold leaders to account well and ask searching questions. With good support from the local authority, they took action to remedy a budget deficit. This entailed reductions in staffing and setting up the collaborative headship. Their actions have been effective, as the budget is now in surplus and the good quality of education for pupils has been maintained.
- The school website is informative, but in some areas there are some omissions, including aspects of performance data for key stage 2 for 2016 and more details about governors' records of attendance at committee meetings over the last academic year and their terms of office. You have undertaken to resolve these issues as soon as possible.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the roles of leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics are developed to ensure that they evaluate the impact of their actions on pupils' achievement
- the website is compliant and is regularly checked to make sure that omissions do not recur
- more opportunities are provided for children in the early years to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cheshire West and Chester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

The key lines of enquiry that I identified for the inspection were as follows:

- Have leaders addressed the area for improvement from the previous inspection?
- Did the percentage of children achieving a good level of development improve in 2016? Has the gap in attainment between boys and girls been diminished?
- What have leaders done to improve the teaching of phonics in Year 1? Are pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, making stronger progress?
- How are leaders improving writing achievement for key stage 1 pupils, especially those who had 'expected' prior attainment in the early years?
- Is safeguarding effective? Has attendance improved since 2015 for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with education, health and care plans? Are leaders and governors aware of their statutory responsibilities?

I carried out observations of learning in all year groups. Three of these were joint observations with you. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, behaviour logs and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with members of staff, governors and pupils. I listened to pupils read and analysed pupils' work. I also looked at the work of children in the early years. I evaluated 38 responses received through 'Parent View' (Ofsted's online survey), nine responses to the online pupil survey and eight responses received through the online staff survey.