

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Sukie Owers  
Executive Headteacher  
St Margaret's CofE Junior School  
Coppice Road  
Whitnash  
Leamington Spa  
Warwickshire  
CV31 2JF

Dear Mrs Owers

### **Short inspection of St Margaret's CofE Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2017, 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 January 2013.

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

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

Throughout the day, it was clear to me that pupils are happy and feel safe in school. Almost all of the parents whose views were gathered agree. Pupils are polite and were confident to talk to me in lessons and around the school about their learning and what they enjoy about school life. You and your team expect high standards from pupils and this can be seen in pupils' conduct as well as the pride that they take in their work. The school environment is both tidy and stimulating, with displays celebrating the pupils' work. Pupils in Year 4 told me enthusiastically about their 'Going the Extra Nile' topic and what they learned about ancient Egypt. Some pupils attend the 'Lunch Bunch', where they benefit from help and encouragement. Others enjoy the opportunities to develop their skills and confidence working with the sports coach. Pupils have a good range of opportunities to learn about science and the creative arts.

Pupils told me that teachers are helpful and that there is always an adult on hand to help if they need something. I spent much of my time in mathematics lessons and it was noticeable how many pupils said that they enjoy this subject, even though they might not find their learning easy at times. Pupils, and some of the parents I spoke to, like the different approaches to supporting the development of mathematics skills that have been introduced since September 2016, and there has been some

good impact.

Since taking up post in September 2016, you have quickly identified the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved further. Staff were almost unanimous that your increased expectations have brought a renewed vigour to their work. Some of the parents I spoke to could see the benefits of the recent federation, under your leadership, with Briar Hill Infant School, for example with helping pupils settle quickly into Year 3. You know that some of the changes you and your predecessor have made are making a difference, for example in relation to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders', including governors', evaluation of the impact of their work is not always timely and sharply focused. As a result, successful strategies are not able to be shared quickly or changes made when necessary.

Leaders tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection with some success. The role of teaching assistants is more carefully managed and the focus of their work has been clarified. You have identified that there needs to be further work on ensuring that teachers plan activities that challenge pupils, particularly the most able, in mathematics. Action taken to address previous underperformance of these pupils has had some success but there remains more to do to ensure that they fulfil their potential. Leaders are sensibly targeting this issue through staff training but also making sure that the mathematics curriculum has more emphasis on developing the skills of reasoning and explanation.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

A culture of keeping pupils safe and secure is at the forefront of the work of leaders, including governors, and this includes knowing pupils well. Leaders have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that child protection records are detailed and comprehensive. You are clear with staff, and they understand, that any concerns about children's safety or well-being must be reported and recorded. During this inspection I saw clear evidence that this does happen. You expect all employees and volunteers to be vigilant and have made sure that the school's safeguarding policies and training help adults working in the school know how to spot signs of possible risk or abuse. We talked through some specific examples of action taken when there were concerns about pupils, including those most at risk, and this helped me to evaluate that leaders' actions were timely and appropriate. Your team works well with different agencies and the most senior leaders are not afraid to challenge when they are unhappy with the decisions made by those agencies. A counsellor is available for pupils and you offer a range of effective emotional and social support for those who are struggling to cope or who just need some extra help.

You explained to me that the curriculum helps pupils to keep safe and the pupils I spoke to confirmed this. Pupils explained how they keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media, and they were also able to explain what they would do if something happened that made them feel uncomfortable or caused them to worry. Pupils get on well together and this also helps them feel safe in

school.

## **Inspection findings**

- The progress made by pupils in mathematics by the end of Year 6 in 2016 was not good. This was particularly the case for higher-ability pupils and girls. However, these groups of pupils currently in the school are making better progress than last year's cohort. Leaders are tackling the issues that caused the previous weakness to ensure that poorer performance in mathematics compared to other subjects does not become a trend. An action plan is in place but the methods for evaluating the impact of the plan are not sharply focused. Leaders are in the process of refining this plan to reflect a smaller number of actions that can then be carefully measured to evaluate success.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge to teach mathematics. A review of pupils' work shows that they are developing good mathematical skills over time. Pupils take pride in their work and this good presentation supports systematic and accurate learning. There is now greater consistency in terms of breadth, balance and coverage of aspects of the mathematics curriculum. Leaders' improvements to the curriculum mean that there has been an increase on developing pupils' reasoning skills and their ability to explain their choices and understanding. However, there remains more to do to ensure that the pupils' skills in both these aspects are well honed.
- The most able pupils in the Year 5 'Jedi' mathematics group particularly enjoy being asked to write a 'challenge' question for their classmates. In doing so, they were able to demonstrate their ability to explain how to calculate unknown angles. While some higher-ability pupils are provided with challenging work, this is not consistent across all classes. For example, in one class the most able pupils were already fluent in their use of the relevant times table that was being applied in the lesson. However, these pupils were still expected to use the same equipment and methods as others, and therefore the most able pupils' progress was not being maximised.
- Since October 2016, there have been considerable changes to the leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities that have led to improvements in the quality of support provided and pupils' progress. Leaders have reviewed how pupils' specific needs are identified and made sure that there is a clear overview of the support available for different pupils. Careful tracking of individual pupils means that leaders know what strategies are making a good difference. In some lessons, pupils are provided with high-quality support from teaching assistants that both challenges and guides their learning.
- The school's information, and the sample of pupils' work I considered, indicate that the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is generally good and improving. There is a forensic approach to checking on and supporting the attendance of these pupils, and I could see the good results of this approach through their increased rates of attendance.
- Since the last inspection, the number of pupils who have or are learning English as an additional language has increased. Currently, there are few who are at an

early stage of learning English. Leaders are aware of the individual needs of these pupils and have a range of appropriate strategies in place to support them, including using effective phonics strategies to help develop their reading skills. You are refreshing staff training on a range of strategies to make sure that each pupil makes sustained progress, although many do so already.

- Leaders have successfully tackled the previous underperformance of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, differences between how well this group of pupils achieve and other pupils nationally are getting smaller. Last year, leaders used the additional government funding for these pupils well, and this resulted in increased rates of progress and some good results in writing for the most able disadvantaged pupils. You have made sure that leaders have thought carefully how to spend the extra money this year. However, leaders, including governors, are not sharply evaluating the impact of this spending to make sure that all of the decisions that they have made are making the best difference.
- The school's website is not currently fully compliant with government expectations. Leaders are in the process of updating the site.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum and teaching in mathematics provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of reasoning and explanation
- teachers in each class provide high levels of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils in mathematics
- there are timely and sharply focused evaluations of the impact of the school's work that then allows for successful strategies to be shared and changes made where necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, a group of governors, the head of school and other senior leaders to discuss the school's self-evaluation and current priorities. I considered the quality of pupils' learning in mathematics, particularly those of higher ability and girls. We discussed how leaders were supporting pupils who have special educational needs

and/or disabilities to achieve well and have high levels of attendance. I also discussed with you how staff were supporting the progress of pupils who are learning English as an additional language, and separately the impact of additional government funding for those that are disadvantaged.

I observed teaching and learning in a number of mathematics lessons, spoke informally with pupils about their work and scrutinised its quality in their books. I also reviewed the quality of a range of pupils' learning over time by looking at a selection of their work. I spent time in the playground talking to pupils. I scrutinised the school's documents relating to safeguarding. I examined documents, including the school's plans for improvement, assessment information, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. I took account of the 53 responses made by parents on the Parent View website, and of the views of 217 pupils and 21 members of staff who completed online questionnaires.