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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Rachel Dare
Executive Headteacher
Lydney Church of England Community School (VC)
Bream Road
Lydney
Gloucestershire
GL15 5JH

Dear Mrs Dare

Short inspection of Lydney Church of England Community School (VC)

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership team have focused relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, an area identified at the previous inspection. Crucially, you have built a strong leadership and staff team who share your commitment and drive to provide the very best education, care and support for each child. You work closely as a team with leaders and staff across The Severn Federation of schools to share best practice and build your leadership capacity. As a result, standards across a range of subjects are rising and pupils are making good progress, especially in mathematics. The school's capacity to improve further is strong.

You place the highest priority on developing pupils' well-being. Your work, and that of your leaders, is central to ensuring that the needs of every child are met in this inclusive and welcoming school. You insist on going the 'extra mile' to provide support for families so that their children can thrive at school. Parents are almost all positive about the work you and your teachers do to make the school a safe and happy community. The pupils told me that they love school and the work their teachers do to make their learning 'fun and interesting'.

You and your leaders have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. There is no complacency at this school. You continually evaluate the impact of the actions you take. For example, your curriculum is effectively planned to provide exciting and engaging learning tasks and visits around

topics such as 'our ever-evolving world' and 'the perils of power'. Displays around the school and work in pupils' books confirm that standards continue to improve. Outcomes at the end of Year 2 are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although writing and reading outcomes are just below the national average at the end of Year 6, standards are improving. The classrooms are vibrant and celebrate pupils' work which inspires them to achieve well. Pupils' writing is of a high quality and an increasing proportion of pupils are on track to reach the higher standards at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics.

You have ensured that standards of handwriting and presentation in pupils' books have markedly improved since the previous inspection. This is no longer an issue. I found that pupils take great pride in their work and value the feedback from teachers to improve even further. They leave the school ready and well prepared to meet the increased demands of secondary school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leaders and the governors ensure that safeguarding is given the highest priority. All safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively and are fit for purpose. The culture of safeguarding is very strong. You ensure that staff and governors receive frequent and appropriate training so that they are equipped to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. This training includes guidance in recognising the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Staff are vigilant in identifying safeguarding concerns and act swiftly to ensure that pupils are safe and receive the support they need. This work is a strength of the school and contributes very effectively to the positive and inclusive ethos which all staff strive to achieve on a daily basis.

Pupils told me that they feel safe at the school and that behaviour is good. Nearly all parents who responded to the online survey agree. In addition, pupils say if and when bullying occurs their 'teachers sort it out'. Pupils confidently spoke about the dangers of using the internet and know how to keep safe online when using computers and mobile phones.

The governor in charge of safeguarding visits the school regularly to check safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. The school's single central record is carefully maintained by the school business manager. You and your governor ensure that all recruitment checks are fully implemented and recorded. The rigour of your work to keep pupils safe is of paramount importance to all who work in this school community.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we discussed and agreed on the main key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included how well the school has responded to the dip in outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2, and how effectively leaders have focused on improving the progress and achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially in reading. They also included how well the school has addressed the low

attendance of some pupils receiving support with their learning and personal welfare and development. In addition, I examined the effectiveness of the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe and secure.

- You and your governors immediately analysed pupils' outcomes in mathematics following the dip in standards in 2016 at the end of key stage 2. You have been quick to strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in this subject. You have made changes to the deployment of teachers to ensure that pupils receive greater challenge and also appropriate and focused support. Teachers now focus with greater rigour on developing pupils' reasoning skills. This is clearly evident in pupils' books and is helping them to gain a deeper understanding, skills and knowledge in this subject. In addition, your agreed approach to teaching mathematics in key stage 1 has now been extended throughout the school. Outcomes in key stage 1 are strong. Work in pupils' books and the school's information confirm a higher proportion are now on track to reach expected standards at the end of Year 6. This represents a significant improvement.
- You continually provide training for your staff to develop their skills as teachers and leaders. Teachers have an increased understanding of the higher expectations of the new curriculum, especially in mathematics, and have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils are making faster progress. Nonetheless, there is further work to do to consolidate the school's approach to teaching mathematics to ensure that pupils are challenged and supported to achieve the highest possible standards in this subject.
- Leaders have an in-depth understanding of pupils' progress and achievement in their subjects. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' learning together with the support of their link governor. This work ensures that they know what is going well and what needs to improve further. For example, leaders have identified that on occasion, the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are not sufficiently challenged to learn effectively. This is currently a priority for leaders.
- Staff, including the well-trained teaching assistants, welcome feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching. They say they are 'held to account but in a supportive way'. This approach ensures that the quality of teaching continues to improve.
- You have focused relentlessly with your special educational needs coordinator on improving outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially in reading. During our visit to the Reception and Year 2 classrooms, we saw children and pupils learning new sounds and practising reading and writing using the sounds they know. We observed adults working successfully with individual children and small groups. Your leaders' strong assessment systems ensure that pupils' progress is rigorously recorded and monitored. Consequently, the school's information and pupils' work confirm these pupils make strong progress from their starting points in their academic and personal development. All pupils achieved the phonics screening check by the end of key stage 1. Pupils in key stage 2 make good progress from their starting points.

- You rightly place a high priority on pupils' good attendance and take firm but appropriate action when pupils' absence slips below that which you expect. In particular, you and your staff have worked tirelessly with pupils and their families to improve the attendance of a small group of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. We examined the many actions you have taken which have had a significant impact on improving the attendance of these pupils. Consequently, the school's work is supporting them to achieve well and develop the skills they need to become resilient and independent learners.
- Governance is strong and provides rigorous challenge and support to ensure that the school continues to improve. In discussions, governors demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They question any underperformance and know how well disadvantaged and the most able pupils are doing. Also, they are determined to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to be successful at this school in both their academic and personal development. Their work is supporting you and your leaders effectively in continuing to improve the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's approaches to the teaching of mathematics are consolidated across the school, building on the good practice already established in key stage 1
- pupils are consistently challenged, especially the most able, to achieve the highest possible standards, especially in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Leahy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspector met with you, senior leaders and subject leaders. Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and members of the governing body. The inspector spoke with parents at the start and end of the school day and observed pupils arriving at school. She visited lessons, accompanied by the executive headteacher and executive deputy headteacher, to observe teaching and learning in all classes. In addition, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and discussed their progress and achievement with school leaders. The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, minutes of meetings, information on the progress of pupils and

documentation relating to safeguarding, including the single central record. The inspector spoke to pupils informally during the inspection, including at lunchtime. She took account of 29 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and further responses to the free text service. The inspection also took account of four responses from pupils and 15 responses to the staff questionnaire. In addition, the inspector spoke with the representative from the local authority with responsibility for this school by telephone.