

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 March 2017

Mrs Christine Friar
Headteacher
Creeting St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
All Saints Road
Creeting St Mary
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP6 8NF

Dear Mrs Friar

Short inspection of Creeting St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2016, the school has been given a renewed vigour and energy so that the school's motto, 'Anything is possible', is demonstrated throughout the school. You have swiftly identified areas where the school could improve and set about putting changes in place to do this. For example, you identified the need to improve the school's systems for assessing the progress pupils make in English and mathematics and have done so. Consequently, you are able to talk with staff in detail about each child's progress and identify what else can be done to ensure that they achieve well.

You have quickly established a strong and cohesive team of staff and governors who work together well. They share your ambition for each pupil. Staff are keen to adapt and further improve their practice, and appreciate your strong and effective leadership. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey said that they are well supported in their work, and that you provide good support for their professional development.

Governors, too, are highly supportive of you and recognise that in the past they had sometimes not been rigorous enough in challenging previous leaders. They appreciate your open and honest approach, and the quality of information that they receive from you. They use this information confidently to ask questions that probe more deeply into areas such as provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors have changed the way their committees operate so that they are more focused. Their regular visits to the school always have a clear purpose linked to the school's improvement plan. Governors invite subject leaders to present information to them at meetings. Consequently, governors have a secure understanding of where the school is strong and where further improvements need to be made.

Teaching is good, especially in English and mathematics because teachers' expectations are high. Teachers plan work in these subjects that closely matches pupils' needs, challenging the most able while providing support for the least able. Pupils said that teachers explain things well, and that adults are always on hand if they get muddled. Teachers' precise feedback, in line with the school's policy, ensures that pupils know what they have done well and where they can improve.

Pupils enjoy a broad and interesting curriculum, for example learning about how to keep healthy and about the properties of materials in science lessons. Pupils enjoy topic work, such as learning about the Second World War. They are knowledgeable about different faiths because they learn about these in lessons and in assemblies. However, sometimes teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics is not sufficiently well tailored to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently.

Subject leaders have taken on greater responsibility for leading their subjects since your appointment as headteacher, and carry out checks on the quality of teaching and learning in their areas. However, the development of the role of middle leaders is at an early stage. Leaders have yet to ensure that robust systems for assessing pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics are put in place. At present, they are not able to identify where teaching and learning are strongest and where more could be done.

Pupils behave very well in and around the school. They are polite and courteous and listen to each other well. For example, in a group of Reception children and Year 1 and Year 2 pupils, everyone, including the youngest children, listened carefully to the Year 2 pupils reporting what they had found out about Florence Nightingale. Pupils say that the school is a friendly place where they are happy, and that bullying is extremely rare. Parents agree with this. One pupil told me, 'We are like a jigsaw – it needs all the pieces to make the picture,' thus reflecting the school's commitment to valuing each pupil as an individual. Pupils also told me that Creeping St Mary is a school where, 'we care for each other and take care of ourselves'.

Parents are highly supportive of the school, as shown by the school's own parent survey and by responses to Ofsted's online survey. Typical of the parents' views received was the comment made by one parent: 'Everyone is very friendly and the head is amazing. When comparing notes with parents from other schools I realise just how special Creeting St Mary is'.

You and your team are encouraging further parental participation in pupils' learning, for example holding reading cafés and information sessions for parents in Year 2 and Year 6. However, you still want to do more to help parents have a better understanding of how they can support their child's learning more effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping pupils safe underpins the work of everyone at Creeting St Mary Primary School. You and your team make sure that you keep yourselves fully up to date with all issues concerning safeguarding. You ensure that all staff are fully trained and that information from training attended by any of you is shared more widely through regular staff updates. For example, you talked with staff about how radicalisation may apply within your school's context and what staff need to look out for. The effectiveness of staff training is reflected in the concerns logged by staff, which show that they know the signs to look for that may indicate that a child is at risk. Your pupil files relating to concerns are well maintained and reflect the care and attention you give to keeping pupils safe.

Appropriate checks are carried out on staff employed at the school. However, leaders, including the governor responsible for safeguarding, have not in the past checked thoroughly enough that where information about staff has been requested and not provided, this is followed up and addressed swiftly. This is now being rectified.

You know the importance of providing information for pupils and for parents about how to keep themselves safe when using technology such as the internet and mobile phones. You carry out surveys to find out about the types of programmes and games pupils use and how frequently. You talk with pupils regularly about what they should and should not do online. As a result, the majority of pupils know how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they encounter something that concerns them. You have provided information for parents about safety online, but recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that all parents understand and take steps to minimise the risks for their children.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at the progress that pupils are making in writing and the level of challenge provided in writing for the most able pupils. Improving writing was an area identified in the previous inspection report. We also focused on this area because in 2015 and 2016, there was a marked difference between the proportions of pupils in Year 6 who achieved the higher level in writing compared with reading.

- Together we looked at pupils' writing. We found evidence of good-quality writing in all classes. The quality of work in Year 1, for example, compared with the work of pupils in Year 2 in September, demonstrates that the majority of Year 1 pupils are already producing work of a higher standard and so will be even better prepared for the demands of Year 2.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. Younger pupils develop stamina over time, moving from producing short individual sentences to longer and more cohesive stories and texts. Pupils' use of grammar and punctuation is improving over time because teachers regularly teach these and remind pupils to include them in their writing. Pupils also learn how to improve their writing for effect. For example, in Year 6, pupils were learning about how to use flashbacks in their stories to create variety and impact.
- The introduction of writing assessments every three weeks where work is marked in detail has been effective in improving the quality of pupils' writing. It gives teachers and pupils a clear focus for improving their work within a short timeframe. It also ensures that teachers refer regularly to the expected standards for each year group and so fully understand what is expected of pupils by the end of each year.
- The most able pupils are challenged well. They are given clear and appropriate targets so that they know what is expected of them because teachers provide specific targets for them and pupils rise to their challenges, producing high-quality work.
- Pupils' self-assessment is being well used. Examples were seen where pupils were editing and improving their own work, reflecting carefully on areas where they could make their writing better. Pupils in all classes present their work well, showing care and pride in their work.
- In some classes, opportunities for writing across other subjects are well used, but this is not consistently the case. In some classes, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop and apply their writing skills in, for example, history or science.
- The next area I focused on during the inspection was the progress made by pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This was because historic data for these groups showed variability, but related to very small numbers of pupils.
- It is evident from talking with you, your leader for special educational needs and with staff, that every pupil is known well in this small school and that their needs are recognised. Because of this, you are able to ensure that provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well matched to their needs. Leaders make regular checks on pupils' progress. Consequently, the majority of these pupils make good progress from their relative starting points.
- You and your leader for special educational needs are aware that while pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in class, sometimes this support is too frequently provided by teaching assistants. Consequently, some of these pupils do not have as much support from the class teacher as they need to make more rapid progress.

- Disadvantaged pupils are clearly identified by leaders so that their progress is closely tracked. During pupil progress meetings, which take place regularly, teachers talk with you about each pupil and about the particular needs of those who are disadvantaged which may be restricting their learning.
- The new leader for disadvantaged pupils has a very clear understanding of the main barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. She has ensured that funding is targeted towards these. In doing so, leaders have carefully considered both the academic and the emotional needs of some pupils. For example, leaders set up a nurture group because they recognise that self-esteem is an issue for some pupils.
- Leaders' detailed consideration of the needs of all pupils extends to those they identify as vulnerable in any sense. They take great care to think how best pupils' needs can be met, and how this might also benefit pupils more widely. The model-making club and paired reading sessions are examples of these initiatives. The paired reading has proved beneficial for all the pupils in developing their reading as well as their social skills as older and younger pupils read together.
- The third area we looked at specifically during the inspection was how effectively the needs of children in early years are met. This was because in the past, the proportion of children in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class who reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was below that found nationally. The proportion reaching the expected standard improved in 2016 and so I wanted to check that children in the Reception Year were well provided for and so making consistently good progress.
- Together we visited the Reception and Year 1 class and found it to be an attractive and engaging learning environment. Adults take care to ensure that resources are well organised and accessible. Displays promote learning well. For example, a display encouraged children to count and another provided support for their independent writing. The room is laid out to reflect different areas of learning. It provides space for Reception children to play and learn independently and with an adult. At the same time, there is space provided for Year 1 pupils to work for more sustained periods of time on tasks.
- Adults plan a good range of activities for Reception children both indoors and outdoors. For example, inside the classroom, children were busy independently making paper pancakes, counting the items they would put on the pancake; others were practising their pencil control and phonic knowledge by writing words about the runaway pancake from the story they had listened to. Outside, children enjoyed a range of activities such as visiting the Creeting café, playing with sand and riding their bikes.
- Children's progress is well documented in their learning journeys, which are detailed and show that children make good progress from their starting points. They develop their understanding of number, for example, learning how to count to 10 and beyond and to apply this in different contexts. They are given opportunities to make marks and to write independently and with adults. This helps them to make good progress in developing their writing skills.

- Good support is provided by adults to promote learning. For example, support is provided for children to learn their sounds and, as a result, children in the Reception Year are already confident in reading many of the sounds they need and blending these to make words.
- Sometimes in whole-class time, adults do not pitch their questions appropriately so that pupils of different ages and abilities are challenged in their thinking.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the role of leaders for subjects other than English and mathematics is further developed, and that assessment systems are implemented to enable leaders to identify and address where progress is best and where it needs further improvement
- the most able pupils are challenged as consistently in all subjects as they are in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Maria Curry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders and the leader for special educational needs. I met with two governors and with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I heard a sample of pupils read. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I visited all classes and evaluated pupils' work. I evaluated the school's website and found it to meet requirements on the publication of specified information.