

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 March 2017

Miss Rachel Thorne
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Primary School
Windmill Lane
East Grinstead
West Sussex
RH19 2DS

Dear Miss Thorne

Short inspection of St Mary's Church of England 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your appointment to the headship of the school in January 2016 marked the start of a more settled phase for the school. You re-established clear direction for the school, quickly refocusing your team on the key priorities for the school's development. Staff have confidence in your leadership. They feel valued and share your aspirations for the school.

The appointment of your highly able deputy headteacher in September 2016 brought further strength to the leadership team, enabling you to focus even more sharply on improving the quality of teaching. She has worked closely and constructively with teachers and has secured further substantial improvements in teaching and in pupils' learning.

You and your team make sure the school has a friendly, welcoming and hard-working atmosphere which supports pupils' good behaviour. Pupils are keen to do well and work hard. They behave well during lessons, playtimes and when moving around school. They greet visitors politely and are kind to each other.

You and your leadership team have an accurate view of the school's strengths and of the priorities for development. You use nationally published information about the school's performance well to identify areas for improvement. You and your team

were understandably concerned about a dip in the Year 1 phonics check results in 2016. You were equally disappointed in mathematics outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and pupils' progress in writing during key stage 2. You and your governors responded quickly, using external reviews of the school's work to help you to look carefully and objectively at the quality of teaching and to identify necessary improvements. You have already taken successful steps to improve these aspects of the school's work, improving pupils' progress substantially in writing and mathematics. You have rightly identified the next priorities in the school's development, including securing further improvements in phonics teaching and ensuring that the most able pupils make consistently strong progress. You have suitable plans in place to structure future developments.

Your governing body provides effective support and challenge for you and your team. Governors are focused appropriately on the difference that improvements are making to pupils' progress and achievement. They make frequent checks on how well additional funds, such as the pupil premium, are used to support eligible pupils' learning and well-being.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. You have used training well to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge and to improve the quality of teaching. You have made changes to the teaching of writing so that pupils have more opportunities to write at length and in a wide range of subjects. Pupils make better progress in English and mathematics than at the time of the previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. High-quality and detailed records contribute well to pupils' safety and well-being. You and your team complete recruitment and suitability checks promptly and update them regularly so that pupils are safe. You give staff weekly safeguarding updates and regularly ask them questions about what steps they would take should a particular safeguarding concern arise. As a result, they are well-informed about safeguarding procedures and alert to individual pupils' needs. You make sure that risk assessments are completed appropriately, including daily checks in those areas of the school affected by the current building work.

Pupils are safe and happy in school. They say there is always an adult in school who will listen to them if they have a concern. They are confident that their teachers will resolve any problems.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I focused particularly on: pupils' progress in writing during key stage 2; how well phonics teaching in the early years and key stage 1 equips children, particularly boys, with key literacy skills; how effectively teaching ensures that pupils achieve their full potential in mathematics during key stage 1 and how successfully leaders and governors ensure that pupils are safe and attend well. I also considered how well leaders have addressed the areas for

improvement identified at the previous inspection. These related to improving the quality of teaching and to pupils' progress in writing.

- Developments in teaching during the past year have led to dramatic improvements in the quality of pupils' writing during key stage 2 and a sharp increase in pupils' progress. Most pupils make rapid progress from their starting points. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by the end of Year 6. Good-quality work in pupils' books illustrates their growing confidence in using vocabulary to create different effects. Pupils are increasingly able to review, edit and improve their written work, as well as following their teachers' advice about how to develop their writing. However, some of the most able pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The proportions of pupils achieving expected levels in the Year 1 phonics check have steadily increased since the previous inspection and were close to the national average in 2015. However, this improving trend in phonics was not sustained in 2016, when results dipped below the national average.
- In the past year, leaders have reviewed phonics teaching in the early years and key stage 1, paying particular attention to boys' acquisition of phonics skills. Training has already been used to good effect to improve teachers' subject knowledge and the early years teacher makes sure that the wide range of writing activities provided appeal equally to boys and girls. However, these improvements are not yet fully established and so have not made a sufficient difference to the development of pupils' phonics skills.
- Developments in mathematics teaching during the past year have improved pupils' progress during both key stages. For example, the increased use of practical equipment has given pupils improved strategies to solve mathematical problems and has strengthened their mathematical understanding. Pupils explain their mathematics work with increasing clarity and confidence as a result. The work in pupils' books indicates that they make good progress in mathematics. More pupils than previously are on track to achieve at least expected standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2017. However, as in other subjects, the most able pupils do not always achieve their full potential, given their starting points.
- Leaders work well with parents and external agencies to support pupils' good attendance. As a result, attendance is consistently in line with, or above, national averages for primary schools. Leaders have effectively addressed the dip in disadvantaged pupils' attendance in 2016. Information about pupils' current attendance indicates that all groups of pupils attend equally well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in phonics teaching in the early years and at key stage 1 are fully established and embedded
- the most able pupils make consistently strong progress and achieve their full potential, given their starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and five governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also talked with a local authority representative on the telephone. You and I visited all classes during the inspection. During these observations, I talked with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. Your deputy headteacher and I also looked separately at pupils' books in a range of subjects. I spoke with pupils during playtime and with parents informally at the start of the school day. I took account of 40 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, 17 staff questionnaire responses and 25 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness, the school's development plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I also looked at information about pupils' learning and progress, notes of a local authority visit and records relating to safeguarding and attendance.