

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 April 2017

Mrs Jan Alexander
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Controlled Primary School Boston Spa
Clifford Road
Boston Spa
Wetherby
West Yorkshire
LS23 6DB

Dear Mrs Alexander

Short inspection of St Mary's Church of England Controlled Primary School Boston Spa

Following my visit to the school on 23 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. You have successfully created a culture and climate in which staff and pupils are valued, respected and expected to meet your high standards. The overwhelming majority of parents have, rightly, praised you and your staff for the caring and nurturing ethos in the school. One parent spoke for many when they said that the school had helped 'children become good little human beings'.

One of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection was to raise attainment in key stage 1. You have worked hard to do this and overall attainment has risen, especially in English and mathematics. However, 2016 was a wake-up call. You were, rightly, disappointed with some pupils' outcomes, especially the progress pupils made in their writing. You and your staff have responded swiftly and effectively.

You have accurately identified the reasons why outcomes in 2016 were not better. Current in-school monitoring, backed up by checks from teachers in other schools and coupled with inspection evidence, shows that pupils are now making improved progress. You have your finger on the pulse of what is happening in school to reassure yourself that pupils are making better progress this year.

You and other leaders have a very clear, honest and accurate picture of the school's strengths and what the key priorities for improvement are. Your school plans show that you are focused on tackling these over the course of the year. However, the targets you have set yourself are sometimes not precise or clear enough. There are times when targets focus more on preparing for inspection rather than the impact actions will have on improving outcomes for pupils. Timescales for when improvement will happen are sometimes unclear and this makes it difficult for governors to hold you and other leaders accountable for the impact you are having.

You manage the performance of teachers well. There are clear links between targets set and a teacher's salary progression. You have made sure that whole-school priorities inform individual teacher's targets. This means that all staff remain focused on improving the specific areas you have identified. You provide good-quality support and training opportunities for staff. I saw the impact of this when looking at the provision for the youngest children in school. In the early years, there are now more opportunities for children to mark make and to speak. There is improved free-flow play both inside and outside. Effective steps have been taken to tap into boys' interests with the creation of learning spaces focused on space and Star Wars. Current in-school information shows that the numbers of children on track to reach a good level of development will significantly rise this year.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff are anything but complacent about safeguarding. They have a clear understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe. They rightly recognise that safeguarding concerns could happen anywhere including in their own school. This leads staff to be vigilant and on the lookout for any potential risks to pupils.

Staff have benefited from a range of safeguarding training including safer recruitment, radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and online safety. This has not only improved staff awareness of these issues but has also had a positive impact on the curriculum. In the light of this training, leaders have improved the personal, social and health education curriculum to ensure that pupils spend more time learning about the dangers of grooming and keeping themselves safe when online. The training on radicalisation has reminded all staff that they do not operate in a 'bubble' divorced from the rest of the world, but that risks can happen anywhere.

Your checks on pupils' behaviour are regular and effective. Behaviour logs show that through the use of rewards and sanctions, the behaviour of pupils, especially of some individuals, has improved over time. Bullying incidents remain low. You have taken very effective steps to make sure that all pupils are treated as individuals and are deserving of equal respect. Consequently, pupils enjoy coming to school, attendance remains high, and there are no exclusions.

You make sure that vulnerable pupils and their families are supported well. The case files I sampled showed that you, along with other professionals and agencies, consider the individual needs of children and their parents. As a result, plans have clear outcomes for both pupils and families. The record of checks on the suitability

of staff to work with children is very well maintained and meets requirements.

Inspection findings

- School leaders have responded well to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Leaders have improved the quality and frequency of checks they make on teaching. This enables them to highlight and share effective practice across the school. As a result, teachers now have more confidence and ability to challenge pupils and deepen their learning. Work in pupils' books shows that more pupils, including the most able, are on track to reach higher standards by the end of the academic year.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a range of opportunities to develop their talents. Leaders, rightly, take the view that 'everyone is good at something'. Consequently, there are numerous opportunities for pupils to excel in sports including rugby, football, netball, Tai Chi and gymnastics. Music is a strength of the school. Pupils often start their day by singing together. Pupils can be seen happily singing as they leave assembly and go back to their classrooms.
- The school benefits from being part of the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership. Through effective collaboration between schools, positive improvements have been made in the accuracy of teacher assessments, the provision for the youngest children in school and the development of middle leaders.
- Phonics teaching is a strength of the school. Teachers have a good understanding of how to effectively teach phonics on a daily basis. Teachers use questioning skilfully to keep pupils on their toes and target individual pupils with challenging questions to check their levels of understanding. As a result, the number of pupils passing the Year 1 phonics screening check remains above the national average.
- Children who did not reach the early learning goals make good progress overall in key stage 1. Pupils I listened to read showed that they were quickly improving their reading skills. Pupils could read with increasing fluency, expression and were able to sound out unfamiliar words. Pupils also showed that they understood what they had read and enjoyed reading.
- The school does not meet the Department for Education's (DfE) requirements on the publication of information on its website. This is because there are a number of policies that are out of date. It is also because governors do not make sure that policies are reviewed, amended and ratified in a timely fashion. The plans for how the pupil premium funding will be used are not clear enough. They do not identify the specific barriers facing disadvantaged pupils in school and how specific actions will help this group of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress pupils make, especially in writing, continues to improve
- governors review policies in a timely manner and ensure that the school website

and pupil premium funding plans meet the DfE's requirements

- improvement plans, including those detailing how pupil premium funding will be used, contain clear timescales for when actions will occur and show the impact these are intended to have on pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your assistant headteacher and a group of middle leaders. I also met with a group of governors and the local authority school improvement adviser. Together with you, we visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I also listened to some pupils read. Consideration was given to 48 free-text responses from the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and to 12 staff survey responses and 25 pupil survey responses. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a range of documentation about how you keep pupils safe. I also sampled vulnerable children's case files.