

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



21 April 2017

Mrs Helen D'cruz
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Primary School
Laureston Place
Dover
Kent
CT16 1QX

Dear Mrs D'cruz

Short inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the school's last inspection. You set high expectations of pupils and staff and have established a culture of 'always doing your best'. Your vision of a strong and caring ethos is realised and is based around your values of love, peace, friendship, forgiveness, trust, perseverance, thankfulness and justice. These values have a positive influence on behaviour and relationships across the school. You ensure that the school is at the centre of this community and you work tirelessly at enabling parents to become confidently involved in their child's education. Parents recognise your drive to raise aspirations for their children.

This is a school where every pupil's progress and personal development is important. You track pupils' achievement effectively, using a range of methods. You identify underachievement accurately and then make sure pupils receive the extra help they need to catch up. Senior leaders check the impact of interventions in a timely manner. As a result, the vast majority of pupils at the school make good progress. Precise targeting of pupil premium funding ensures that there are no significant differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others.

Overall, pupils' behaviour is good. They respond sensibly to the clear expectations communicated in the behaviour policy. The well-structured behaviour management systems help pupils to develop responsibility for their own behaviour; this is evident in the classrooms. The online questionnaire, Parent View, indicates that a small

number of parents are concerned about behaviour. During my visit, there was clear evidence of pupils playing cooperatively and sensibly on the playground and they are well supervised. Pupils said that they enjoy school and feel supported in lessons.

At the time of your last inspection, the report noted many strengths of the school, including recognising that standards in English and mathematics had risen. It also identified a need to improve opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and, especially, their numeracy skills in other subjects across the curriculum. Leaders have addressed this effectively. Literacy and numeracy skills are being taught and developed well across the curriculum. A portfolio of high-quality writing across the curriculum is in place to provide planning guidance and support for teachers.

You have identified clear priorities for the next stage of improvement and are beginning to take the right steps to improve them. You know that the most able pupils will only make rapid progress in lessons if expectations are higher and pupils are stretched and challenged. You are aware that the quality of pupils' handwriting is inconsistent across the school and you are working with senior leaders in the school to address this issue.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils feel safe at school and most parents are satisfied with how the school cares for their children. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and could talk about it confidently during the inspection. They said they had recently received some e-safety training and this had changed their online habits.

Staff receive regular and relevant training about safeguarding; policies and processes are well embedded and staff have a full understanding of how to raise concerns. Any necessary actions are taken without delay and are followed up in an efficient manner. Staff receive training about keeping pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. The school works well with external agencies. School leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are up to date and records are detailed. Good communication and effective support for vulnerable parents are strengths of the school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked at: attendance levels of disadvantaged pupils; progress of the most able pupils; progress that key stage 2 pupils make in mathematics and the quality of pupils' handwriting.
- The majority of pupils attend well and this is celebrated in assemblies. High levels of absence from a very small group of pupils disproportionately affected last year's attendance rates. The current picture is significantly improved, with attendance rates on or above national averages. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is in line with all pupils nationally. The school has effective systems in place to quickly identify poor attendance and staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

- Pupils in key stage 1 and 2 are not reaching the higher standards in English and mathematics. Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve, which is evident in both lessons and in pupils' books.
- Overall progress in mathematics between key stages 1 and 2 was a weakness last year and it was particularly affected by a small group of pupils who joined the school in Year 6. Progress this year has significantly improved across the school and this is evidenced through the school's current information about pupils' progress as well as progress observed in lessons and over time in pupils' books.
- The quality of handwriting is inconsistent across the school; this is evidenced in the variability of quality in individual pupils' books as well as across classes. Some pupils do not take enough pride in their work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have consistently high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve in English and mathematics so that more reach the higher standards of which they are capable
- the quality of handwriting improves across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Sir Robin Boshier
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other leaders. I spoke with teachers, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority. I visited eight lessons with members of the senior leadership team and scrutinised a range of pupils' work. I took account of 18 responses to the staff survey and 23 responses and comments from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and around the school. I analysed a range of school documentation, including your school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement, information about pupils' achievement and records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.