

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



28 April 2017

Mrs Julie Chambers
Headteacher
Willaston Church of England Primary School
Neston Road
Willaston
Neston
Cheshire
CH64 2TN

Dear Mrs Chambers

Short inspection of Willaston Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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 February 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 established a caring and inclusive school ethos that is underpinned by increasingly high academic expectations. You have ensured that your staff share your commitment to providing pupils with a broad and balanced education that teaches the virtues of hard work, and challenges all pupils to be the best they can be. You have established a respectful, enthusiastic and happy community in which every pupil receives the individual care and attention needed to thrive.

Pupils recognise and value the work that is done to help them develop into friendly and tolerant citizens. Parents are very positive about the work of the school. They appreciate your efforts to create a happy and safe environment. Most parents feel that their child is making good progress at the school. You have instilled in staff a palpable commitment to doing the best for the pupils. Staff morale is exceptionally high. The staff are enthusiastic and immensely proud to work at the school. One member of staff summed up the views of many when she described how she has 'seen the school go from strength to strength'.

You and your leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas needing development. Your plans to improve the school focus sharply on the areas that will most benefit pupils and you have ensured that all staff are empowered to make a significant contribution to school improvement.

Your monitoring of teaching is rigorous and you have made staff accountable for the progress made by pupils. You have also developed leadership capacity at the school, particularly with the appointment of a new leader of key stage 1 and the early years. You are also developing the role of subject leaders within school. Consequently, you have been able to drive sustainable and far-reaching improvements throughout the school, such as improvements to the teaching of mathematics and support for disadvantaged pupils.

You have successfully built upon the strengths that were identified at the last inspection. Pupil behaviour and attendance remain very good, and pupils continue to benefit from a lively and engaging curriculum that provides excellent opportunities for enrichment. Most pupils participate in extra-curricular clubs, such as street dance and cross stitch. Fortnightly forest school lessons are used to enhance the conventional curriculum and engender within pupils a love and respect for the natural environment. You continue to ensure that pupils develop a strong moral compass, and pupils regularly contribute to different charities from the local food bank to 'operation Christmas child', which provides disadvantaged children around the world with festive gifts.

You have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been tackled effectively. Teaching in key stage 1 has improved significantly since the last inspection and this has led to pupils making faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in key stage 1 have increased greatly and teaching exhibits the same positive traits that are evident further up the school. You have changed the school's development plan to make it a practical guide for teachers and easier for governors to check.

You were rightly disappointed with the performance of the 2016 Year 6 cohort in national tests and you have used this disappointment as a springboard for evaluating all aspects of the school's effectiveness. As a result, you have mobilised the whole community to drive improvements across the school with a renewed sense of urgency, rigour and determination. Pupils are now making faster progress throughout the school in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Year 6. You have made it a priority to increase the extent to which the most able pupils are challenged and it is clear that the most able pupils are now making good progress. You are keen to guard against complacency and recognise that improvements to the teaching of the most able need to be consolidated and extended further. This will ensure that an even greater proportion of pupils perform at levels that are beyond those typically expected for their age.

You are capably supported by a determined governing body. The appointment of a new chair and vice-chair of governors has been instrumental in strengthening the direction and guidance offered by the governing body. They are unwavering in their determination for the school to improve further and are uncompromising in their pursuit of excellence. They hold you and other leaders stringently to account for all areas of school performance and they have been meticulous in their approach to ensuring that pupil outcomes rapidly improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your work on safeguarding is effective. As the leader of safeguarding, your commitment to creating a culture of vigilance has ensured that all members of staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You have increased capacity among the designated safeguarding team by ensuring that all senior leaders at the school have received enhanced training. You ensure that all appropriate checks are carried out on prospective employees, governors and volunteers. You have also ensured that all members of staff receive regular training to help them remain attentive to any potential signs of abuse or neglect. Members of staff are knowledgeable about all safeguarding procedures, including what to do if they have concerns about an adult working at the school. All safeguarding arrangements are effective and records contain an appropriate level of detail. Although the school has not recently had to deal with any serious safeguarding incidents, all staff subscribe to the mantra that 'it could happen here'.

Inspection findings

- Your team has high expectations of what pupils can achieve and they provide pupils with work that is well matched to their abilities. During the inspection, some excellent examples of effective questioning were observed, with teachers using questioning to check pupils' understanding and to probe them to think more deeply. In all observed lessons, pupils had to think hard and deeply, which has been a key focus of recent staff training. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 3 were challenged to classify household objects in various ways and compare and contrast their different properties.
- Pupil behaviour was excellent in all lessons and around the site. Pupils are articulate, mature and they are adept at working collaboratively with their peers.
- You have ensured that a sustained and effective focus has been maintained on improving the quality of pupils' writing throughout the school. Your approach to improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is rigorous and methodical and this is having a pronounced impact on improving the technical accuracy, fluency and sophistication of pupils' written work. It is evident from the work in pupils' books that they have made a great deal of progress since the start of the academic year.
- You have done a great deal to improve the quality of boys' writing and there is clear evidence to indicate that improvements are being made in this area. Despite this, boys' writing is still not as good as the girls'. Consequently, you recognise this as an area that requires even greater focus to further diminish differences in achievement.
- You have welcomed the support of the local authority to bring about rapid improvements to the teaching of mathematics. Representatives from the local authority have been impressed with the speed at which your staff have embedded improvements in this area. You have ensured that problem-solving is a consistent feature of learning in mathematics and this is making a strong contribution to pupils making faster and more secure progress.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils throughout the school have consistently made progress that is broadly in line with national averages. You have ensured

that there has been an even greater focus on accelerating pupil progress this year, and these efforts are yielding positive results. Pupils throughout the school are making faster progress than in recent years in reading, writing and mathematics. Your careful tracking of pupils' achievement outside of English and mathematics also indicates that levels of attainment are high across the curriculum.

- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from your astute spending of the pupil premium. Your team has ensured that the pupil premium is used to fund additional support that directly addresses potential barriers to achievement. Therefore, disadvantaged pupils are making faster progress than other pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements to the teaching of the most able pupils are embedded, so that a higher proportion of pupils throughout the school perform at levels above those typically expected for their age
- an even greater focus is maintained on improving the writing of boys so that even quicker progress is made in this area.

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

Yours sincerely

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- The inspector undertook a learning walk with you to observe teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Meetings took place with you, the deputy headteacher, members of staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. The inspector also spoke with the school's improvement partner and a representative from the local authority.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on behaviour and learning.
- The inspector worked with the headteacher to scrutinise the work in pupils' books.
- The inspector examined a range of supporting documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan and information about safeguarding.
- The inspector considered 52 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 17

responses to the staff questionnaire. He also considered 70 comments made by parents through Ofsted's free text service and 75 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's parental survey.

- The inspector looked closely at the school's website.