

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 May 2017

Mrs Paula Shaw
Headteacher
Great Horwood Church of England Combined School
School End
Great Horwood
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK17 0RG

Dear Mrs Shaw

Short inspection of Great Horwood Church of England Combined 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 January 2013.

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, you have built on this village school's previous success and developed it further so that it meets the needs of the diverse community it serves. Together with the staff and governors, you have developed an environment that puts pupils' needs at the heart of everything you do. Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness shows that you know exactly which aspects of the school could be even better. The school development plan addresses these in appropriate detail, and decisive action by you and the governors has been successful in initiating valuable improvements.

Parents describe the school as 'a village school with a traditional ethos which is at the heart of the community'. They comment on how involved they feel in their children's education, and welcome opportunities to volunteer and share in learning activities. A strength of the school is the manner in which it nurtures individuals and supports families. You and your staff take time to understand pupils' different needs, and provide appropriate help and support. This ensures that pupils achieve well and leave the school ready for the next stage of their education.

In classrooms, pupils concentrate and work hard. They are keen to talk about their learning and are proud of their achievement and progress, particularly in English. In key stage 1, some pupils were keen to show me the treasure chest they had found and explain how this had led them to produce some high-quality, descriptive writing

about a pirate ship. Some pupils in key stage 2 grappled with the concept of scale and ratio, persevering when they found things difficult. In the early years, the older children were actively encouraging the younger ones to take part in an activity. Together they took great delight in creating a river of water filled with glitter. Across the school, pupils achieve well, but occasionally tasks do not challenge the most able sufficiently.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to enhance learning by providing greater opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills when working in other subjects. Teachers now have higher expectations of pupils' writing in all subject areas, and workbooks show that pupils are making good progress in this area. The use of numeracy skills across the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development but can be seen in science and computing lessons. Last year, some groups of pupils did not make enough progress in mathematics. The leadership team has begun effective action to address this issue, but changes need to be embedded further in order that progress accelerates.

In 2016, the proportion of pupils in Year 2 who met the expected standard for their age in mathematics and writing was lower than the national average. Through carefully documented assessment information, you were able to show that these pupils had made good progress from their starting points. An increased level of support in Year 3 is helping pupils to progress more quickly. During my visit, I saw the pupils in Year 3 applying themselves to writing activities that were well matched to their needs. They were all keen to share their learning and contribute to the class discussion with the teacher.

Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and are rightly proud of the way that everyone is welcomed and how well pupils understand the school's values. Governors work closely with you to ensure that the use of pupil premium funding is well targeted and is documented carefully. As a result, disadvantaged pupils of all ages and abilities achieve similarly to their classmates and other pupils nationally in all subjects. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness and challenges, and value the recent changes you have made. Governors monitor robustly the impact of these changes on pupils' progress, in order to hold leaders fully to account and make appropriate strategic decisions.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a priority at Great Horwood. You make sure that all processes are fit for purpose, up to date and in line with those of the two local authorities you liaise with. A well-managed information programme ensures that all staff, governors and visitors to the school are aware of their responsibilities and follow the latest guidance. Administrative staff complete and record clearly the appropriate employment checks they make, which you and the chair of governors review regularly. The designated safeguarding leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. You are diligent in following up referrals and ensuring that appropriate and sensitive support is available to the families in your community. Comprehensive records are kept of this work.

You work hard to ensure that all parents are included positively in their children's education. All parents who participated in the parent survey agreed that their children were safe at Great Horwood. One commented, 'We are pleased with the care and education that our children receive at school.' Most pupils attend regularly but, for some groups, attendance remains below the national average. You and your team's ongoing work with individual pupils and their families is helping to improve attendance, so that all pupils are in school often.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school, at home and online. In the early years, hand-drawn posters make evacuation processes understandable to young children. In other areas of the school, the designated safeguarding leaders are identified clearly and information is available for older pupils who may want to talk to someone outside of school. Pupils said that they enjoy school, feel safe and are encouraged to look after their own health and well-being.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision: pupils' achievement in mathematics and writing; the impact of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; how well leaders' actions have improved pupils' outcomes and attendance; and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.
- In the early years, children of all abilities select activities with confidence and enthusiasm. They are supported appropriately by the environment, both indoors and outdoors, with resources helpfully made easily accessible for the children to use. Nursery and Reception-aged children are usually taught together and the foundation stage leader has ensured that the Victorian building is well adapted to meet the needs of children of all ages. Staff challenge and support children effectively through questioning, and respond appropriately to their needs and development. Assessment in the early years is thorough and the leader takes care to ensure that findings are used well to plan future activities and set up appropriate learning areas.
- You have made beneficial changes to the teaching of writing across the school. The development of 'non-negotiables', when pupils present a piece of writing in any subject, is having a positive impact, with some pupils making rapid progress as a result. Workbooks reflect the care and thought that pupils put into their writing, which they are rightly proud of. In key stage 1, pupils were able to use phrases like 'the wind feels like it is full of dark magic' to add interest and excitement to their descriptions. Across the school, pupils are building up writing skills and stamina.
- In all classes, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Staff, including learning support assistants, have a detailed knowledge of these pupils' specific needs. This enables them to provide focused, effective support in the classroom and on the playground, and this also encourages independence. Teachers plan tasks that meet pupils' individual needs well. In many classes, activities challenge pupils

while also allowing them to experience success. You and your staff monitor carefully these pupils' progress, and support is refined appropriately to accelerate rates of progress. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator works closely with you and already has a firm understanding of the latest requirements. She works effectively with other agencies to provide the support pupils need.

- The leadership team has put in place effective measures to ensure that pupils who join the school from local first schools at the beginning of Year 3 have a smooth transition and they quickly become part of the school community. There has been an increase in the number of pupils from the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Travellers of Irish Heritage communities and the school has reacted rapidly and successfully to address their needs. This has ensured that they have quickly become part of the school community and their progress is good.
- The appointment of a new mathematics leader in September 2015 has led to a focused approach to addressing the needs of pupils in mathematics. The mathematics leader has worked closely with governors and leaders from other schools to put in place strategies to improve the progress of all pupils. The schools assessment information shows that overall progress and attainment are increasing, but there is a need to increase the pace of improvement.
- The development of a mathematics curriculum personalised for the school has led to some pupils improving their depth of knowledge in mathematics. In class, pupils tackle mathematics problems in a systematic manner and they talk about their learning with confidence and enjoyment. In workbooks, pupils show developing reasoning and reflection skills as they respond to adult comments such as: 'What are your top tips for using coordinates?' However, this is not consistent across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able writers are challenged well so that their progress accelerates further
- recent changes to the teaching of mathematics are quickly and consistently embedded in all classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Good
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, and four governors. I visited all classes, jointly with you, to look at teaching and learning. I examined pupils' work in their exercise books. I listened to two Year 2 pupils and two Year 3 pupils read. While visiting the playground, I spoke informally to pupils and parents. I analysed a range of school documentation, including attendance records and analysis, minutes of governing body meetings, the school development plan, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I took into account 29 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the results of the school's own surveys of pupils, parents and staff.