

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



12 June 2017

Mr Mark Street
Headteacher
St Mary and St Margaret's Church of England Aided Primary School
Southfield Avenue
Castle Bromwich
Birmingham
West Midlands
B36 9AX

Dear Mr Street

Short inspection of St Mary and St Margaret's Church of England Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 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 effective leadership and the importance that you place on your school's values means that pupils are making good progress. You have worked closely with staff, parents and pupils to sustain a sense of teamwork and an ethos in which pupils can thrive. The 'family feel' that you have engendered, is felt by the whole of the school community. One comment made by a parent represents the voices of many, 'Both of my children have thrived here, they have felt valued and happy all of the time, even when they do struggle, and that's important to me.' As a result, the development of the whole child and the wider opportunities that you provide, through targeted monies, is raising the aspiration of all to reach the highest standards.

Since the previous inspection leaders at your school, including governors, have taken effective action to improve the presentation of pupils' work. Consequently, more pupils are expected to reach the higher standard in writing. Pupils' spelling is less well developed throughout the school and this means that only a few pupils do not meet the expected standard.

You have rightly targeted school resources to improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent. The focus on holding parents to account for the attendance of their children is reducing absence rates. The

importance of good attendance in this school has become a focus for leaders' work. Along with the relatively new rewards for pupils and the greater focus on attendance through collective worship, these steps have been effective. As a result, current overall attendance has risen to be in line with the national average. Despite these improvements, some pupils' absence remains stubbornly high. You have not been complacent about the need to improve attendance for these pupils and the most recent tracking shows that for targeted pupils, attendance is improving rapidly. Leaders recognise the importance of continuing this upward trend to ensure that all pupils attend well.

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. The majority of parents agree and pupils' views about the school are positive. Pupils' attitude to learning is good and the school places an important emphasis on this. Supporting all learners, but particularly the disadvantaged pupils, to have a range of experiences is important to leaders. Teaching engages pupils and staff expectations of what pupils can achieve is high. As a result, the pupils' workbooks show that most pupils are making consistently good progress.

Governors talk knowledgably about the plan and use of additional funds received by the school to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. This is because governors regularly meet with leaders to scrutinise the work of the school. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points. However, the school's evaluation of the impact of the interventions planned is less sharp. This means that leaders are not acutely aware of which of the school's strategies are the most effective. Consequently, some pupils do not get the most effective support to accelerate their progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school knows each of its pupils and their families as individuals. As a result, leaders ensure that pupils are safe. The community feel to this school is one of its strengths because leaders ensure that pupils receive the support that they need.

Pupils feel safe and they are clear about who they can go to for help. The school's curriculum supports pupils in knowing how to keep themselves safe in a range of contexts. For example, pupils are clear that everything they read on the internet is not always true. Pupils are acutely aware that some people can hide behind fake profiles.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders, including governors, have undertaken a range of appropriate training to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities. For example, a joint training session for all staff and governors formed part of the annual update on important aspects of keeping pupils safe.

Records scrutinised as part of the inspection show that leaders are clearly following up on actions needed to ensure that pupils are safe. However, you rightly recognise

that leaders' checks on the fastidiousness of the recording by adults can be improved even further.

Inspection findings

- Overall attendance has risen and the current figure is in line with the national average. Services purchased by the school to support and challenge families is reducing persistent absence. For those pupils who need to attend more regularly, their most recent attendance figure is much higher than previously. Consequently, since February, the majority of pupils have had an attendance that is closer to the national average. Nevertheless, you agree that this important work needs to continue for the attendance of targeted pupils to rise further.
- The school's assessment system is providing effective guidance to staff. As a result, the work for pupils is more closely matched to their needs. This means that staff expectations of what pupils can do are high and leads to most pupils making good progress from their starting points. However, for a few pupils who are lower-ability, these expectations could be higher.
- Assessment information kept by the school provides a wide range of information used by teachers and leaders to shape provision. Leaders check regularly and invite pupils and staff to a 'tea party' where a discussion about learning takes place. These checks ensure that leaders have an accurate view of the progress in pupils' workbooks. Follow-up actions are tightly focused on what has been observed and so training for staff is well matched to improving performance. The assessment system has been revamped and you agree that this needs time to embed fully across the school.
- Leaders' checks on the work of the school, including those by governors, are effective. Senior leaders have high aspirations for this school and governors are involved through a range of committees and first-hand visits. Documented evidence shows that governors challenge and support the school by dedicating time to meet with leaders beyond the scheduled termly meetings. This means that governors can talk with genuine knowledge about the work of the school and its impact. However, leaders' checks on the recording of information to keep pupils safe could be more meticulous.
- Pupils' workbooks showed that good progress in writing is made by most pupils. Over time, sentence construction becomes more complex, handwriting improves and spelling accuracy too. For a few pupils, progress is less strong and your assessment information confirms this. You acknowledge that ensuring consistently good progress for all pupils is a focus, including pupils' accuracy of spelling.
- The attitudes of pupils in lessons and around school is good. Pupils enjoy lessons and value the teachers' input. As a result, pupils respond well to the challenges in lessons. School leaders provide effective support and guidance to staff on how to improve their teaching, learning and assessment. This ensures that staff are clear on how to improve their practice.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. During our joint scrutiny of pupils' workbooks across key stage 2, teachers'

subject knowledge contributed to the good progress made. For example, Year 5 pupils worked hard to use parenthesis to remove pieces of information for text extracts and were successful as a result of teacher modelling and questioning.

- The pupils I spoke to during the inspection reported that they feel safe in school and that behaviour is good. They are taught how to keep themselves safe as part of the curriculum. They say that there are very few incidents of any kind of bullying. Pupils know how to report a concern and whom to turn to if they are worried about something. They felt that the staff would deal with these worries quickly.
- Leaders' plans for pupil premium funding lead to a range of opportunities for targeted pupils. Your vision is that pupils should experience a range of core and non-core opportunities. For example, many pupils play a musical instrument that uses some of the targeted funds. The range of opportunities provided also includes targeted support for those who need help to be ready to learn. This leads to pupils being focused, behaving well and enjoying learning. However, the checks on the effectiveness of all of the interventions is less sharp. Consequently, leaders are less aware of which of the interventions make the strongest contribution to progress. This means that some pupils do not receive the most appropriate support quickly enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the checks they carry out on records to keep pupils safe are extended and developed further to provide even greater accuracy.
- the evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium is sharp so that leaders know which of the interventions are the most effective
- attendance continues to improve for those who are still persistently absent
- staff's knowledge and use of the schools' assessment system leads to consistently high expectations for all pupils
- the school's system for teaching spelling leads to more pupils reaching the highest standards in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Kentish
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and two other senior leaders. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority via telephone. I spoke to parents before the start of the school day and considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and looked at free-text comments from parents. I visited, together with you, four classes to observe learning including a detailed look at pupils' workbooks. I met with a group of pupils and I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and around school.

I scrutinised information about pupils' progress during this academic year. I considered other documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including policies and checks on staff employed in the school, and checked the school website. I also analysed the range of views expressed by staff through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school and its leadership.