

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Duncan Nelmes
Woodbury Salterton Church of England Primary School
Stony Lane
Woodbury Salterton
Exeter
Devon
EX5 1PP

Dear Mr D Nelmes

Short inspection of Woodbury Salterton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been significant changes at the school in recent years that have strengthened provision and pupils' outcomes. These include the school joining with Littleham Church of England Primary School to form the Pebblebed Heath Federation. This has widened the range of staff expertise and improved the quality of teaching and learning. The introduction of Nursery education has extended the school's provision and created an early years unit. The appointments of yourself as executive headteacher and of a head of teaching and learning have strengthened leadership and management.

Leaders, including governors, accurately identify aspects of the school's work that need development. You use the information gathered about pupils' progress to take well-conceived actions and bring about improvements.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to raise pupils' attainment in writing and to provide more opportunities for them to write across the range of subjects. Your work in this regard is highly effective. Pupils' written work often shows deep levels of thinking and expression, for example, when explaining Darwin's theory of evolution.

Another aspect for development was to ensure that pupils are set work at the right level of challenge and know what they have to do to improve. You have addressed

these issues effectively for pupils at all levels of ability. When questioned, pupils, including those who find learning more difficult, confidently explained what they were doing and how they were improving their work. Pupils' work in books shows good progress. They respond well to teachers' guidance and spell familiar and more complex words with increasing accuracy.

All those who work in the school sustain a caring atmosphere where pupils' ideas are nurtured. This enhances pupils' learning, as well as their spiritual and personal development. Pupils appreciate the way staff value their efforts. Pupils new to the school settle quickly because of the wholehearted nature of the welcome they receive. As a result, pupils behave extremely well and show very positive attitudes. These features are much appreciated by parents.

You and your staff work diligently to encourage good attendance. Your newsletters show that you remind parents that pupils should not be taken out of school for holidays. Despite this action, school records show that unauthorised absence continues and results in a below-average rate of attendance. You acknowledge that the school's partnership with a small number of parents needs strengthening in order to further improve attendance.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have successfully established a strong culture of safeguarding and ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They participate fully in regular training to keep abreast of the latest guidance and requirements. Staff at all levels get to know pupils really well, including those new to the school. This enables staff to address concerns swiftly to keep pupils safe. Administrative staff assist well by ensuring that records, especially checks of the suitability of staff, are of high quality.

Governors ensure that procedures for safeguarding meet the statutory requirements, including by undertaking comprehensive health and safety audits of the school's facilities. Child protection records show that you liaise supportively with parents and outside agencies to deal with issues as effectively as possible.

Pupils readily say that they feel very safe in school and explain that, 'This is because we have lots of friends and teachers really care about us.' Pupils also show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example by describing how to use computers safely. At breaktimes, older pupils act as 'buddies' and are especially supportive of younger pupils by helping them to understand risks and play safely. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire feel that their children are safe in school. One parent expressed a widely held view when writing, 'This is a very caring and nurturing school where the teachers all care about every child and know them so well.'

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, my first line of enquiry was to check how leaders are ensuring effective provision for mathematics in the school. This was because outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 were lower than you expected.
- You and senior leaders have been swift to investigate this issue and have taken effective action to secure pupils' good progress in mathematics. You have made effective use of specialist expertise across the federation and from the local authority to provide training for staff and improve the teaching of mathematics. Teachers have raised their expectations. They have also developed pupils' use of mathematical language in order to deepen their understanding and improve their fluency in arithmetic. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 demonstrated their good understanding and skills in solving problems by explaining their ideas and justifying why their answers were correct.
- My second line of enquiry was to examine the effectiveness of teaching in setting suitably challenging work for pupils of different abilities. This is because of variations in the number of pupils in each year group and their different starting points.
- Staff identify and support pupils' different needs in a tailor-made and effective manner. This secures good progress during their time in the school. The governors' strategic decision to establish Nursery provision demonstrates their determined focus on meeting children's needs as early and successfully as possible. From the moment they enter school in the early years, children benefit from good individual support.
- Staff across the federation share their expertise effectively. This has strengthened the way they assess and record pupils' developing skills and progress. Staff use assessment information to ensure that the work planned for pupils captures their interest and builds on their previous learning. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 showed great interest when studying their dinosaur topic. The work of pupils in Years 5 and 6, especially the most able, shows that they relish being challenged to explain which strategies during mathematical and scientific enquiries are most likely to be accurate.
- Finally, I examined the teaching and learning of phonics. This is because the proportion of pupils meeting expectations in the Year 1 phonic screening checks has varied over recent times and was below average in 2016.
- You have rightly identified that the large proportion of the pupils who did not reach expectations in last year's phonic screening check had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Even so, you have reorganised the way that phonics is taught in early years and key stage 1 so that it more specifically caters for pupils' needs and differing starting points. Pupils are making good progress and most children in Reception and Year 1 use phonic skills well to decode unfamiliar words. As a result, a greater proportion of current Year 1 pupils have met the expected standard than did so in 2016.

- A small number of pupils, including some arriving from other schools, lack confidence. They find reading new words difficult and this slows their progress.

You are providing extra support for these pupils and encouraging parents' help with reading at school and at home. However, you recognise that this focus on reading needs to be sustained to fully develop pupils' confidence and skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work with parents in improving pupils' attendance
- there is a continued focus on improving the reading skills of those pupils who lack confidence and find reading difficult.

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

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the Head of Teaching and Learning and with the other staff with leadership responsibilities. I also met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with you and the Head of Teaching and Learning and, together, we scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils and support staff during the morning and lunchtime breaks. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, progress and school self-evaluation and development. I took account of 32 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and 32 additional written comments from parents.