

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 September 2017

Mrs Carolyn Divers
Headteacher
St George's CofE Primary School
Stamford Street
Mossley
Ashton-under-Lyne
Lancashire
OL5 0HT

Dear Mrs Divers

Short inspection of St George's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 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, the senior leaders and the governing body ensure that St George's is a caring, family community underpinned by Christian values. You know your pupils well and this supports your mission statement: 'The opportunity to be unique together achieving excellence.' Your school's strong moral and religious values make an important contribution to the development of pupils' personal, spiritual and academic achievement.

Pupils' conduct around the school and their behaviour in lessons are good. During my classroom visits, it was evident that pupils are engaged in their learning and are respectful of one another and listen carefully and thoughtfully to each other's ideas. The majority of parents are confident that their children are learning well and are happy with the school's work.

Your governors and senior leaders are passionate and contribute well to the school's work. Governors' understanding of their roles has improved since the previous inspection so that they have a more accurate view of the school's work. Governors have recently undertaken a skills audit and as a result undertook training on school data analysis. Governors now have a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are therefore able to offer greater challenge to school leaders.

At the last inspection, inspectors advised you to implement a successful programme for the teaching of handwriting. Handwriting has been a focus for improvement and the success of this is evident in pupils' presentation within their workbooks. Pupils now take pride in their work.

At the last inspection, inspectors also advised you to set suitably challenging tasks for the more able pupils and to provide opportunities for pupils to learn on their own. Pupils demonstrated good levels of independence during joint lesson observations as teachers set tasks that are engaging and motivating. However, teachers do not yet challenge pupils consistently in all classes.

In 2016, at the end of key stage 1, an above-average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in reading and the percentage of pupils achieving greater depth in reading and writing was well above the national average. However, in writing and mathematics the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard was well below that of pupils of a similar age nationally.

At the end of key stage 2, in all areas other than writing, substantially more pupils achieved the expected standard than those of a similar age nationally. In writing the percentage was just below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth was just below the national average. You are well aware that, at greater depth, pupils achieved less well in writing and mathematics. You are also aware of the need for a larger proportion of pupils to achieve greater depth across all areas by the end of key stage 2.

You know your school well and have identified appropriate actions to address these areas in need of improvement. Due to staff changes, the initiatives for improving pupils' writing are not fully embedded in all classes.

Although the school's key stage 2 results were good from 2014 to 2016, unvalidated data for 2017 indicates a substantial dip in outcomes for the current Year 6. Your school data analysis identified and tracked this cohort and subsequently provided evidence to the inspector to demonstrate that, although low attaining, these pupils have made good progress from a very low starting point at key stage 1 in 2013.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. Regular and appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken and is up to date, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Staff are confident about reporting any child protection concerns. Leaders communicate effectively with external agencies. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding.

Pupils speak confidently of their faith in teachers to care for them should they have any concerns. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was how well pupils in key stage 1 are being supported in attaining the expected standard at the end of Year 2. This was because the attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average in writing and mathematics.
- You have already put in place a plan of action to promote the development of writing and basic skills for all pupils with an emphasis on boys' writing in particular. Specialist advice has led to training to support the English leader on aspects of writing, such as improving focused planning to support learning. Staff moderation in writing and mathematics has been supported by collaboration with other schools in order to share best practice. Staff are more confident and this is likely to raise aspirations and expectations of pupils' outcomes.
- To improve pupils' learning leaders have made changes to the teaching of English and mathematics since the last inspection. Leaders have used training effectively to support a more consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics through an intensive curriculum based on problem-solving. The work in pupils' books illustrate improvements in the quality of pupils' learning as a result.
- Teaching of phonics is well planned and improvement in outcomes has been steadily increasing to ensure that they are above national expectations. This is borne out by effective teaching observed during the inspection.
- My second line of enquiry arose from my analysis of the school's assessment information in relation to pupil outcomes at the end of key stage 2, in particular how leaders ensure that all pupils are challenged to ensure greater depth at the end of KS2 in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- You had identified this as a school-development focus and have carefully considered the way the curriculum is organised to ensure that these variations in pupil outcomes are addressed. Leaders are establishing expectations of greater depth in all curriculum areas and are focusing on teaching that deepens and extends learning for the most able pupils. This will provide increased clarity for teachers to improve pupils' outcomes at greater depth. The proportion of key stage 2 pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, mathematics, grammar, spelling and punctuation was well above national averages in 2016.
- Outcomes in writing are not as strong as in other areas. In a very small number of classes, writing tasks are not sufficiently varied or challenging and not provided frequently enough in subjects other than English. You have made increasing the number of opportunities for writing a priority and you and your staff are dedicated to making further progress in this area. Leaders are now addressing the remaining variations in the quality of teaching to secure further improvements in pupils' learning. Thorough analysis of pupil's books identified that in the majority of cases good progress was evident in a range of curriculum areas.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the quality of teaching are securely established in all classes to ensure that pupils meet expected standards
- teaching deepens the most able pupils' learning sufficiently
- opportunities for writing at length are effectively planned across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Rennie
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, other teachers and five members of the governing body. I spoke with a representative of the local authority and also with the school improvement partner.

You and I made short visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to their learning and to look at pupils' work. I listened to pupils read to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching of reading.

A wide range of documentary evidence was considered, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. I checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements. In addition, I scrutinised an extensive range of pupils' work, including some with subject leaders.

I spoke with pupils during lessons and at other times during the day, I took into account 31 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and considered an additional 30 comments received via text message from parents.