

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



25 September 2017

Miss Sharon Pole
Headteacher
Ecchinswell and Sydmonton Church of England Primary School
Ecchinswell
Newbury
Berkshire
RG20 4UA

Dear Miss Pole

Short inspection of Ecchinswell and Sydmonton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 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. Following a period of adjustment, including changes to the staffing arrangements in key stage 2, you are re-establishing your clear expectations. You have ensured that the school is now on a more secure footing. Despite some recent recruitment challenges, it is testament to the highly committed leadership team, together with well-timed and effective support from Hampshire local authority, that standards have been maintained. The majority of parents are happy with the school with one telling the inspector, 'This is a brilliant school with brilliant teachers.'

Leaders' self-evaluation is thorough and meticulous. Where you identify any dips or blips in standards, you promptly and tenaciously instigate thoughtful and detailed actions. You and your team welcome external advice. Under the supportive and watchful eye of Hampshire local authority, you have worked methodically to ensure that high-quality teaching and learning opportunities are prevalent. Pupils are happy, purposeful and proud of their school. One parent commented, 'My child is well taught and very happy at Ecchinswell.'

In 2016, pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 2 declined. Taking decisive action, you set about restoring high standards. Unvalidated information shows that achievement rose significantly in 2017, with more pupils attaining the standard

expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stages 1 and 2. Disadvantaged pupils also achieved well, reaching standards in line with their peers. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, including children in the early years, who make good progress from their starting points.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified strengths in leadership including in the quality of governance. Governors continue to contribute exceptionally well, keeping a keen oversight of school performance. They make regular visits to the school and use first-hand information to ask challenging questions of school leaders. Governors are fully immersed in checking the effectiveness of school improvement actions. They offer helpful support and wise counsel to school leaders.

You have also addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified previously. You were asked to improve pupils' skills in writing and increase their confidence in using their numeracy skills when tackling mathematical problems. You and your staff have worked diligently to improve these aspects of the curriculum, with excellent support from local authority representatives. Pupils write for a range of purposes and teachers plan tasks that offer appeal. For example, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 were inspired to write diary accounts after watching news footage of Hurricane Irma, making good use of emotive vocabulary to describe the scene. Nevertheless, you acknowledge that improving pupils' presentation skills remains a key area for development, particularly in key stage 2. In mathematics, pupils increasingly apply their skills to solving more complex problems, such as finding missing numbers in composite calculations. Nonetheless, some pupils, particularly those in Years 4 and 5, have ground to make up in order to achieve what is expected for their age in writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. The school makes appropriate checks on all adults, including volunteers, governors and temporary staff, to confirm their suitability to work with children. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and have a good understanding of how to initiate support if concerns emerge. Governors, too, play their part, undertaking safer recruitment training to ensure that they have the necessary up-to-date knowledge to carry out their responsibilities thoroughly.

Pupils' attendance is broadly average. Pupils say that they enjoy school and feel safe. The school works well with a variety of outside agencies to provide additional support to families if the need arises. In particular, leaders are working extremely closely with the behaviour support service to provide some additional support for individual pupils. Leaders log all behavioural incidents meticulously.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the achievement of pupils, including the disadvantaged, in mathematics; the achievement of the most able pupils; and the effectiveness of leaders in driving improvement in other subjects, including science.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Working closely with the local authority, you have overhauled the school's provision, purchasing new resources and investing in staff training. Pupils now have greater opportunities to use a variety of apparatus to secure their understanding. Teachers model methods effectively and have high expectations. Pupils get off to a good start with number work in the early years and key stage 1 and many achieve the standards expected for their age. For example, during the inspection pupils in Year 1 could competently recognise different numbers to 100, successfully identifying them on a 100 square. Pupils say mathematics is their favourite subject.
- Furthermore, in key stage 2 standards in mathematics have risen. Unvalidated information in 2017 shows that more pupils achieved the standard expected for their age than in the previous year. Pupils' books show that the quality of teaching has improved significantly in recent times, particularly in upper key stage 2 following the secondment of an experienced teacher and leader in April 2017.
- The most able pupils achieve well, particularly in reading. Standards have risen considerably since 2016. Unvalidated information in 2017 shows that many pupils achieved at greater depth in reading in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. The school has a significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers plan motivating tasks which are well within the grasp of pupils of differing abilities. Teachers' questioning encourages pupils to extend their ideas further and think deeply.
- Leaders carefully evaluate school performance, using first-hand observations alongside pupil performance information to inform their judgements. Monitoring information is used effectively to drive further improvement. As a result, the school's improvement plan is detailed, clearly understood and focuses on the right priorities. As a result, standards have risen across the curriculum, including in science, where the majority of pupils achieve the standards expected for their age.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of pupils' presentation, particularly in key stage 2, improves
- identified pupils, particularly in Years 4 and 5, make faster progress in order to reach the expected standard for their age.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I also met with six pupils in key stage 2. I observed learning in 10 lessons or parts of lessons, all jointly with the headteacher. Together with the mathematics leader and headteacher, I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of 13 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 10 written comments. I also took account of the views of seven members of the school team who responded to the online survey for staff. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.