

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



28 September 2017

Mrs Lynne Willis  
Stoke Minster CofE Aided Primary School  
Boothon Old Road  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST4 4EE

Dear Mrs Willis

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stoke Minster CofE Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 September 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

**Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other leaders and staff and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with a colleague from a multi-academy trust (MAT) the school is working with. I undertook brief visits to lessons for all year groups, accompanied by senior leaders, and looked at examples of pupils' work. I evaluated a range of documents and records, including the school action plan, information about pupils' outcomes and their attendance and external reviews of teaching and learning.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the leadership team. An acting deputy headteacher has been appointed following the retirement of the previous postholder. The appointment of an additional assistant headteacher has increased the capacity of the senior leadership team. Staff have been appointed to subject leader posts, including English and mathematics. There are also opportunities for other staff to work with subject leaders to gain leadership experience. Four newly qualified teachers joined the staff in September 2017.

Leaders and governors have made the decision for the school to join St Chad's MAT. The local authority supports this decision. The process of the school's conversion to join St Chad's MAT is well under way. Leaders are already aligning school systems and policies to those of other schools in the trust. Staff are benefiting from shared professional development opportunities. Leaders are waiting for legal aspects of the academy conversion process to be finalised.

## **Main findings**

Leaders responded promptly to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The school's action plan clearly communicates the steps to be taken. The action plan includes deadlines and challenging success criteria. The governing body regularly scrutinises leaders' actions and evaluates their impact on the school's overall effectiveness. Governors regularly visit the school and are able to validate the judgements and information that leaders share with them. Senior leaders use the school's action plan to produce detailed plans and schedules for other leaders to carry out their roles. Leaders are clear about how their work contributes to the school's development. New leaders benefit from working alongside more experienced colleagues who model leadership skills and behaviours. Experienced leaders also provide coaching to support and develop new leaders.

Staff who are new to the school take part in detailed induction sessions. They quickly become familiar with leaders' expectations regarding how learning time is used. Newly qualified teachers benefit from a mentor who supports their professional development. New teachers also work closely with more experienced colleagues in year-group teams as they develop their teaching experience. Regular phase meetings allow leaders to monitor how staff apply school policies, reinforce expectations and ensure a consistent approach. Leaders ensure that staff have a consistent approach to their teaching through a clearly planned programme of monitoring teaching and learning throughout the school.

Leaders have changed the school's approach to developing pupils' reading skills. Staff have received appropriate professional development, including opportunities to observe other colleagues to make sure that they are skilled in the new approach. Leaders ensure that staff develop pupils' reading consistently through regular short visits to lessons and through more formal observations. Pupils' outcomes in reading

are improving. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading at key stage 1 increased from the previous year. The proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics also rose in 2017. There are also improvements in reading attainment at key stage 2. The proportion of pupils who have been at the school a long time who achieved at the expected and higher standards has increased. Pupils who joined the school recently and who speak English as an additional language improve their reading and writing, but do not fully catch up with their peers by the end of key stage 2. Leaders' analysis of reading progress in key stage 2 suggests a sharp rise from the previous year, although information about national rates of progress are not yet finalised for 2017.

Leaders continue to regard staff subject knowledge in mathematics a high priority. Effective development opportunities include training sessions and sharing best practice. Leaders check the effectiveness of these sessions through analysing pupils' attainment in regular assessments and through observing teaching. In lessons, teachers place a strong focus on the use of specialist mathematical words, and encourage pupils to use these technical terms accurately. Mathematics leaders focus on making sure that pupils with high prior attainment are suitably stretched in lessons. Leaders ensure that teachers plan a range of questions and problems that have suitable challenge for these pupils in lessons. Leaders' analysis of pupils' progress at key stage 2 shows that the strategies used are having a very positive impact. In 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 looks likely to show a sharp improvement compared to the previous year. However, national information about progress has not yet been finalised. Pupils' attainment in mathematics continues to improve across the school, particularly the proportion of pupils achieving at higher standards, but remains below national standards.

The school has a relatively high, and increasing, number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Clear routines are established to provide appropriate and effective support for these pupils who start school at different times during the year, and need help to catch up. Staff identify pupils' specific needs so that plans can be put in place to support them as soon as they start at the school. Existing pupils help new arrivals to become familiar with the school's routines and to make friends. Staff promptly assess and address pupils' English language skills. Class teachers receive sharply focused strategies to support pupils in lessons. Additional small-group sessions are provided by a specialist member of staff when appropriate. Pupils' English language development is frequently reassessed, and support adjusted accordingly. Staff also help parents to encourage their children develop English language skills. For example, they provide specialist resources for pupils to read at home. The whole school community benefits from sharing and celebrating the rich and varied culture and experiences that new pupils bring to the school.

Pupils' overall attendance last year was consistent with the previous year, which was similar to the national average. Staff continue to identify pupils whose attendance is a concern and provide appropriate support to parents. Pupils are

encouraged to maintain high levels of attendance through rewards and celebrations when their attendance is high or improves. Leaders' changes to routines at the start of the school day have successfully improved punctuality. For example, the average number of pupils late to school more than halved last year.

### **External support**

The school receives effective external support from the local authority and St Chad's MAT. The local authority regularly reviews and evaluates the actions leaders are taking. Improvements are identified and next steps discussed. Leaders respond positively to the robust challenge that these reviews provide. Officers from the MAT supported the development of the school's action plan in response to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The action plan outlines clear actions, deadlines and success criteria and successfully provides clarity of roles and purpose of actions for school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**