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Mrs Nichols
Headteacher
St Giles' Church of England Primary School
Church Street
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Dear Mrs Nichols

Short inspection of St Giles' Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the 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. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your school was judged to be good in September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You provide clear leadership along with drive and enthusiasm, which motivates staff and pupils to achieve well. You and your staff have created a school where all pupils' academic and personal development is equally important. Leaders and governors are excited about the new federation you have joined and have a clear plan as to how this will further benefit the pupils of St Giles'.

During the last inspection, many strengths were identified in your school, such as the good start that children make in Reception class and the good provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These remain strengths.

Your staff know pupils and their families well. This, together with the high priority given to supporting pupils' personal development and welfare, are key strengths of your school. You ensure that particularly effective care and support are offered to vulnerable pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly positive and expressed appreciation for the support given to their children.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that their teachers make learning fun. You have ensured that a broad curriculum with topics and high-quality enrichment experiences interests pupils. Music and physical education (PE) have become particular strengths of the school due to specialist teaching. All pupils play a musical instrument. During the inspection, the whole school took part in one of the regular musical assemblies and performances. A link with a local sports partnership is ensuring that the additional funding for PE and sport is promoting positive attitudes to exercise and healthy living. We also saw interesting and challenging work in a computer lesson. Bright, colourful displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around your school, prepared by the pupils themselves, exemplify particularly high-quality art and written work across a range of subjects.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the varied learning opportunities and the clubs on offer. Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. They take great pride in helping each other and contributing to the school community. Some pupils talked about being sports leaders and their responsibilities within their classes. Year 6 pupils are keen to be buddies for newly arrived Reception children. Pupils are articulate and express their views and opinions confidently. They listen well and respect other people's ideas. Their attitudes to learning are highly positive, as can be seen in their willingness to work together, their diligence in class and in the high quality of presentation in their books.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that necessary checks are made on all staff prior to taking up appointments. Records are full and meticulously kept. Staff undertake regular and relevant training. Any concerns about pupils are raised immediately and all staff are acutely aware of how to monitor changes in pupils' behaviour. You hold weekly meetings to share any concerns regarding pupils and this ensures that nothing is overlooked. Your staff have a motto that, 'you cannot safeguard alone,' which exemplifies the pervasive culture of vigilance in your school. Where there has been the need, staff have worked closely with other professionals, such as those for healthcare and family support, to make sure that pupils are safe and well supported.

Pupils report feeling very safe in your school. They have a good awareness of when they may be at risk and how to manage this effectively. Pupils relate this to when they are using the internet, and know whom to speak to if they are concerned. Parents are confident that their children are well looked after. Parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire overwhelmingly agreed that their children are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- During the last inspection, the inspectors identified two areas for further improvement: firstly, to improve mathematics teaching so that pupils make as much progress as they do in English; and secondly, to ensure that most-able pupils are sufficiently challenged so that they make good progress in all subjects. During the inspection, mathematics was a key line of enquiry. 2016 outcomes suggested that pupils' progress in mathematics remained weaker than those nationally, and that in reading and writing. Additionally, a smaller proportion of pupils reached standards that are above those expected for their age than is the case nationally. Therefore, I looked at how teachers challenge most-able pupils in their lessons.
- Leaders and governors have responded vigorously to these areas of improvement. You have developed accurate assessment systems that enable leaders and governors to closely monitor pupils' progress and make necessary provisions to ensure that pupils falling behind in mathematics catch up. You regularly monitor the quality of teaching, and have provided teachers with support and challenge to refine the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You have devoted more learning time to mathematics, and along with literacy skills, mathematical work is now an integral part of many cross-curricular projects.
- Governors have put aside significant funds to ensure that the school provides excellent resources for mathematics learning. You have also made good use of outside expertise to improve the planning and teaching of mathematics. The mathematics leader has introduced a new mathematics scheme and successfully raised the profile of mathematics with pupils and parents through displays and competitions.
- Pupils now speak of their enjoyment of mathematics. As a result, throughout the school, pupils are now making equally good progress in mathematics and English. Provisional assessment results for 2017 show that pupils in Year 6 made good progress in mathematics. Pupils also attained at least as well as pupils nationally from their starting points in key stages 1 and 2. Children in early years achieved the standards expected for children of their age in mathematics.
- While visiting mathematics lessons, we identified that sometimes pupils are not checked on frequently enough by their teachers or teaching assistants. On occasions, this meant that pupils continued to work under misconceptions, or they did not move on with their work as rapidly as they might.
- We looked at pupils' books and you rightly identified that teachers' feedback to pupils about their work in mathematics and other subjects is not always clear enough about what they need to do to improve their work further. You have correctly identified this as an area for improvement because not all staff are, as yet, fully implementing your school policy.

- You have ensured that all teachers plan appropriate work for pupils, including the most able pupils, from their starting points in English and mathematics. Lessons are well planned to ensure that most-able pupils do not waste time listening to instruction that is unnecessary for them. All pupils are keen to take up the challenges that are set and regularly attempt to push themselves to undertake more demanding work. As a result of this, your school assessment information shows that a greater number of most-able pupils are now working above what is typical for their age in English and mathematics.
- In pupils' cross-curricular books, much of the work, particularly of the most able, is of high quality. However, pupils are not routinely assessed from their starting points in subjects other than mathematics and English. You have recently begun work to improve teachers' understanding of how pupils, particularly the most able, progress in other subjects. This is useful work and will help teachers to make sure that the most able pupils are set work that challenges them fully in all areas of the curriculum.
- I also identified that the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than is the case for these pupils nationally. Therefore, another key line of enquiry was to look at how you ensure that the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is as good as it can be. We agreed that systems to monitor attendance in your school are thorough and help families to understand the importance of good attendance. We looked at the reasons for these individuals' lower attendance, and agreed that in almost all cases, there were clearly special circumstances. We also found that staff do everything they can to minimise the effect of lost school time on pupils' learning. For example, staff had had medical training to enable pupils to attend school and access healthcare professionals who visit the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and other adults check on pupils' work regularly during lessons so that misconceptions are addressed and pupils' learning is moved on as quickly as possible
- teachers' feedback to pupils is specific enough to help them improve in line with school policy
- teachers plan work in subjects other than English and mathematics that ensures progress and sufficient challenge for all pupils, especially the most able, from their starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Sutton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the senior leader, parents, two governors and pupils. I visited all the classrooms and an assembly, looked at children's work and observed behaviour in and around the school. A number of documents were reviewed, including the school's records of monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, and pupils' assessment and progress information. I also scrutinised attendance information, the single central record of employment checks and child protection systems. I took account of the 27 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey.