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Mrs Wendy Figueira
Headteacher
St Peters Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, West Hanningfield
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Dear Mrs Figueira

Short inspection of St Peters Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, West Hanningfield

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school has retained the positive approach to teaching and learning identified at the previous inspection, which enables pupils to develop strong academic and social skills. Parents are extremely positive about the benefits gained by their children at the school and feel well informed about the school's work. This is evident in the many positive statements made on Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire. Parents commented on the 'wonderful place of learning' and the ways in which the school 'prepared young people to go to secondary education well equipped'. One parent stated that the school 'is the perfect primary school'.

In collaboration with your leadership team, including the governing body, you have ensured that the school has continued to improve. One parent commented on the 'very rich, rounded, quality education', which others echoed. You have provided a clear vision of success for the school, which is evident in the school improvement plan and in practice.

Governance at the school is very effective. The well-led governing body shares your ambition for the success of each pupil at the school. Governors are regular visitors, gathering crucial information with which to commend and challenge the school's

approach. Governors' work is clearly linked to the school improvement plan and their insight is effective in supporting your leadership.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are kind, supportive and respectful of the learning and social needs of others. As a consequence, the school has a calm, harmonious atmosphere conducive to effective teaching and learning. Pupils are eager to learn, demonstrating an infectious curiosity for the subjects they study. You have ensured that pupils study a broad, enriched curriculum, including opportunities to learn about a variety of cultures and faiths. For example, all pupils are involved in supporting the education of a pupil in Uganda. As a consequence, many pupils have a strong understanding of the experiences of their peers in other parts of the world. Pupils are reflective, empathetic and tolerant of each other.

You correctly judge writing to be a strength of the school. Strong leadership in English has ensured that pupils develop critical writing and handwriting skills. As a result, they have opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences. Progress in writing at both key stages was above the national average in 2016 and 2017. This is because staff maintain high expectations and provide effective guidance to ensure that pupils craft their writing carefully.

You and your leaders take effective action where you consider improvements are required. For example, as a result of your developments in the teaching of mathematics, outcomes at key stage 2 rose sharply and were significantly above the national average in 2016. You recognise that there are still areas in which the school can continue to improve. For example, you have already put in place plans to improve the ways in which pupils develop reasoning and fluency in mathematics. You also know that the improvements in reading skills in Year 6 have not yet been consistently embedded in other year groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are confident and articulate about the ways in which leaders' actions help to keep them safe, both in school and beyond. For example, pupils are able to explain the strategies they have learned at school to remain safe when using the internet. All parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children were safe and well cared for at the school. One parent stated that the school is 'a wonderful, caring, child-centred school'.

Pupils are able to define bullying accurately and they agree that it rarely occurs. However, pupils agree that, if bullying takes place, staff resolve the issues very quickly and effectively. Pupils are very aware of their rights and responsibilities as members of the school community. You ensure that pupils' voices are heard and that they experience the concepts of free speech and democracy in action through their participation in the school council, the worship council and the environment council.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust. Records, including the checks made on adults who work at the school, are reviewed regularly. Although it is compliant, you acknowledged that the single central register

required a little more organisation. Inspection evidence demonstrated that leaders are highly alert to the needs of their pupils and act swiftly to ensure that they receive the correct level of protection.

All adults who work at the school, including governors, are well trained in their safeguarding responsibilities. They follow the school's clear processes for reporting a concern about a child, enabling leaders to keep pupils safe. Pupils also told me that they know what to do and who to go to if they have a problem.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was pupils' achievements in reading at both key stages. Most pupils made progress significantly above the national average in 2016 and in line with the national average in 2017. However, attainment at key stage 1 and key stage 2 was slightly below the national average for the lower-attaining pupils and girls, respectively.
- Although the number of pupils is very small, you have acknowledged the issue and put in place improvements to the teaching, learning and assessment of reading at both key stages. As a result, you have reviewed the ways in which pupils develop their understanding of ideas in texts and revised the approaches for teaching and learning. Inspection evidence demonstrated that these revised strategies have had an impact on pupils in Year 6. However, the impact is not yet evident in other year groups. As a result, you have reviewed the ways in which pupils develop their understanding of the ideas conveyed in the texts they read. It is, however, too early to evaluate the effect of these strategies on pupils throughout the school.
- You recognise, along with your leadership team, the critical importance of reading for pleasure in raising standards. For example, all classes read stories collaboratively. Many pupils told me how much they enjoyed reading and how appreciative they were of the opportunities afforded by the school. Pupils' regular reading of a range of texts informs their strong writing skills. Reading a range of genres has allowed pupils to develop the crafting of their writing very effectively. As a result, pupils' reading and writing skills inform each other and many pupils make sustained and effective progress, particularly in writing.
- The proportion of pupils who succeeded in the phonics screening check was in line with the national average in 2016 and 2017. Inspection evidence showed that the teaching of phonics is systematic and effective.
- My second line of enquiry was how leaders are ensuring that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, receive a broad and balanced curriculum. You and your leadership team continually monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum. As a consequence, the curriculum is strong and well suited to meet the needs of pupils.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills, understanding and knowledge of a range of subjects. For example, pupils learn to play the recorder, learn French and develop a strong understanding of topic links across subjects. The science curriculum focuses on developing pupils' scientific skills and awareness of the role of science in everyday life. Parents have helped to model for pupils how science, such as engineering, informs their working lives.

- As a small school, you are alert to the importance of providing pupils with experiences beyond their immediate neighbourhood. Pupils told me with great enthusiasm about the range of trips and events that the curriculum offers, such as trips to RAF Hendon to gain an understanding of the role of the military. In addition, pupils talked of the positive experience of singing in public spaces such as Westminster Abbey and the O2 Arena with other schools from around the country. You and your leaders ensure that the physical education and sport premium is used effectively to encourage pupils to engage in competitive sport and to live healthy lifestyles. Pupils told me about the positive impact of sports clubs on their enjoyment of learning at the school.
- I also sought to establish the effectiveness of the early years provision. You and your leadership team have worked hard to ensure that the proportion of children who make a good level of development continues to increase each year. Your robust assessment of children, both on arrival and throughout the year, ensures that you are alert to the needs of each child and can provide additional support where needed.
- During my observations, I noted the infectious enthusiasm of children for learning. Through exciting, well-planned lessons, children develop both critical thinking skills and enjoyment of learning. For example, I observed children engrossed in the story of an elf who had been kidnapped. As a consequence, children approached their learning with purpose and focus, determined to use their skills to locate the kidnapped elf. As a result of effective teaching, learning and assessment, children in Reception make good progress in all areas of the curriculum. They are well prepared for the demands of the key stage 1 curriculum when they begin Year 1.
- My final line of enquiry was how well pupils keep themselves safe both in and outside of school. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. They are kind, thoughtful and polite. Pupils play well together and support each other. Pupils told me how effective the school's behaviour policy, 'the fruits of the spirit', was in ensuring that pupils were kind to each other. Pupils told me how much they enjoyed school and how much the staff cared for and supported them. Attendance continues to be a strength of the school. This is testament to the hard work of you and your staff in making school an enjoyable and harmonious place for pupils to attend. Your strategies for managing and resolving behaviour are effective. As a result, you do not reach the point of having to exclude pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching and learning of mathematics focus more specifically on reasoning and fluency to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress
- pupils continue to develop the skills of reading and understanding a range of texts so that they make rapid progress across the school.

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 Aykin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the course of this inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders and a group of four governors.

I spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. I also met formally with a group of 12 pupils. I visited a range of classes across key stages 1 and 2 and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school. A range of documents were analysed or discussed, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, documents relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour, minutes of governor meetings and curriculum plans.

I considered the views of 33 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 19 views parents expressed via the free-text service, and analysed eight staff views expressed via the staff questionnaire.