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Mrs Maire O'Regan  
Headteacher  
Margaretting Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
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Dear Mrs O'Regan

### **Short inspection of Margaretting Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 February 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You have successfully brought about rapid improvement to the school since standards dropped sharply in 2016. You immediately took decisive action by commissioning a full local authority review to establish what needed to be done to halt the decline. You then worked tirelessly with your new subject leaders and early years teacher to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievements across the school. This led to a rapid rise in standards in 2017 to above the national average by the end of key stage 2, a significant increase in the proportion of children in the early years who reached a good level of development.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. School leaders have raised pupils' achievements in writing and have ensured that the most able pupils produce higher-quality work. You have ensured that the attendance rate is above the national average. Working with your senior leaders, you have also improved the curriculum, providing more opportunities for pupils to participate in physical education and the arts. The 15-minute dance session that you have introduced at the end of each day is very popular with pupils. These improvements were confirmed in the local authority's follow-up review two months ago. The local authority representative described the

'brilliant job' you have done in improving the school and acknowledged that the school has the capacity to sustain further improvements.

Parents have great confidence in the school under your leadership, and there is increased interest in the school from prospective parents. This is reflected in the sharp rise in pupil numbers since the previous inspection. Parents highlighted the improved range of activities for their children, including visits to enrich learning and more opportunities for pupils to assume responsibilities in the school. They praised you for moving the school rapidly forward and all parents said that their children are making much better progress now. Parents described the school as open and welcoming with a strong family atmosphere, where you and the staff are always available and ready to listen to their views. They praised the extra workshops provided by leaders to show them how to support their child's learning. Nearly all agreed that they would recommend the school to other parents. Parents have attended the mathematics workshop and watched what their children were able to achieve. They also looked at how to support their children with reading.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual development and their understanding of fundamental British values effectively through the curriculum. Pupils learn about different cultures and beliefs through religious education topics and assemblies. They have opportunities for reflection and learn the difference between right and wrong. In addition, they learn about democracy through the election of the head boy and head girl and the school council. Pupils are kind and considerate towards others and are polite and courteous to visitors. They enjoy taking on responsibility as library helpers, sports leaders and members of the school council. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. In discussion, all 10 pupils said that this is a good school and talked about how they are making better progress because teaching makes learning enjoyable. They said that there are more trips, and gave examples of the choir singing in London, a visit to the zoo and a residential journey.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and records are suitably detailed and of high quality.

The school is working closely with parents to promote pupils' well-being and safety. Leaders ensure that all policies relating to safeguarding are available to parents and send home regular newsletters which include aspects of safety. Staff maintain good relationships with parents and always make themselves available to resolve any of their concerns. Most of the parents were very positive in their response to Parent View, including the free-text responses. They highlighted the way the school engages with them and in all matters relating to safeguarding. There are clear links on the website to enable parents, and other visitors, to get more information on safeguarding. Staff maintain high levels of supervision.

The procedures for vetting the suitability of staff and visitors to work with children are rigorous, with all the required checks being made. Training in child protection

and safeguarding is up to date and conforms to the latest guidance.

Your recent safeguarding audit confirms that there is a strong culture for safeguarding in the school. You have improved the security of the school site and you carry out detailed assessments of any potential risks to children when they are in school or out on a trip. The curriculum promotes pupils' safety well. Pupils are taught about the dangers of social media, cyber bullying and the safe use of computers. Governors consider aspects of welfare and safety at their meetings. Pupils, staff and parents agree that pupils are safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- I wanted to find out how well leaders addressed the fall in standards in 2016, and the weaknesses identified in the teaching and learning of mathematics in the local authority review. I also wanted to check if pupils are achieving as well in mathematics as they are in reading.
- You have been very successful in your determination to turn the school round and have achieved this in a very short space of time. This was confirmed in discussion with the local authority. You and the mathematics leader raised standards in mathematics from well below the national average to above the national average within a year. Leaders achieved this by effectively introducing a range of initiatives such as ensuring that pupils use and apply their mathematics more frequently to solve complex problems. Leaders also provided booster classes and revision programmes in mathematics. As a result of these initiatives, pupils are making better progress in mathematics, which is reflected in the significant improvement in the school's 2017 results compared to those in 2016. In Year 6, 90% of pupils achieved age-related expectations in mathematics, reading and writing combined in 2017 compared with 50% in 2016.
- Pupils' work over time and the school's assessment information show that they are making as good progress in mathematics as they are in other subjects, including reading. This includes pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and is a result of the good teaching and learning in mathematics.
- Pupils are now deepening their mathematics reasoning skills because teachers are focusing well on developing key skills and ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of key mathematical ideas. Teachers are ensuring that each pupil learns a mathematics topic in depth before moving on to the next topic. For example, they will spend a whole week learning the eight times tables and using this to solve problems by multiplication and division until they show mastery. As a result, pupils develop fluency. They said that they enjoy learning tables and love the challenge of solving problems using them.
- Another of my key lines of enquiry was to find out how effectively leaders are improving teaching and learning so that it is at least consistently good. You have focused on training teachers in the use of the school's assessment system to enable teachers to promote good learning by setting challenging targets and

planning learning activities to deepen pupils' understanding. The two days' training you provided on the school's assessment system enabled teachers to assess and record progress more confidently. Their assessments are mostly accurate, although on occasions they are too conservative. You check the reliability of teachers' assessment weekly and give them clear guidance on how to improve it.

- You also rationalised the use of teaching assistants to ensure more effective intervention. You check the impact of these interventions termly and modify them accordingly. As a result of these initiatives, standards have risen in 2017 and pupils across the school are making good progress.
- You visit classrooms regularly and triangulate the outcomes at least once per term with the assessment information on pupils' progress and the progress seen in pupils' written work to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school. Leaders are ensuring that expectations are high, and we saw this in our visits to lessons and in pupils' books. This is leading to consistently good teaching and learning.
- Another area of focus was on how well governors are improving their oversight of the school's work since the previous inspection. Governors are beginning to check more effectively on how well their policies and plans are being implemented in the school through their visits to the school. They have overseen the headteacher's redevelopment of the website and ensured that it is fully compliant. Recently, governors have visited the school to look at how the school is implementing its guided reading policy and the impact this is having on standards. They are holding the school to account for its spending of additional funding for pupil premium and primary sports and have attended a mathematics workshop for parents to gauge how well it is received by parents and how well it meets their needs.
- Governors are benefiting from good support from the local authority as members of the strategic intervention board. They are learning new skills quickly but have yet to fully implement a schedule of focused visits to rigorously check on the impact of the school's work in a wide enough range of areas.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' assessments are more accurate and consistent across the school
- governors fully implement their programme of visits to the school to enable them to have an effective and first-hand view of how well their policies are being implemented.

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

Declan McCarthy  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, governors and two local authority representatives to discuss the progress since the previous inspection. I talked informally to staff and pupils during lesson visits about learning over time. I also discussed learning with pupils while looking at samples of their work. I heard a few pupils read and looked at their reading records. I talked to a group of 10 pupils to seek their views about the school and their learning. I looked at the 25 responses to Parent View, including the 18 free-text responses. I also examined the nine staff responses to the Ofsted questionnaire for staff. I looked at the school's website to check compliance. I examined a range of documentation, including two local authority reviews of the school's work and their safeguarding audit; your safeguarding policies and procedures; records of staff training in safeguarding and your records of the checks made on the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils; your school improvement plan and self-evaluation documents; records of incidents of behaviour and attendance figures; and the whole-school records of the progress pupils are making over time.