

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Carolyn Chivers  
Headteacher  
Hythe Bay Church of England Primary School  
Cinque Ports Avenue  
Hythe  
Kent  
CT21 6HS

Dear Mrs Chivers

### **Short inspection of Hythe Bay Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 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 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. You have focused particularly on developing the quality of teaching and learning and building a team of effective middle leaders. You have built a strong partnership with other schools in the locality. As a result, teachers share expertise to develop their skills and drive change. Parents particularly appreciate the nurturing ethos of the school and how staff treat children as individuals. One parent told me: 'This school is amazing, so good. Teachers really made an effort to understand my child's little ways. They have really built up her self-esteem.'

The impact of your leadership is evident in the good progress pupils make over time, from starting points which are lower than those typical for their age. Pupils' progress in reading and writing has been in the top 20% of schools nationally for at least two years. You are rightly concerned that progress in mathematics was not as strong as that in reading or writing in 2017 and have lost no time in making this an improvement priority. Pupils in Year 6 are now making consistent rates of progress in all subjects. Across the school, the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others has narrowed significantly, although closing this even further remains a priority. Standards are high in the early years, and current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are well placed to achieve good outcomes.

Pupils enjoy school and appreciate the help they receive academically and emotionally. They feel they are treated as individuals and that 'teachers know their

class like the back of their hands'. Many told me that learning was a pleasure, not a chore. They are very accepting of differences and do not tolerate inequality. Pupils who attend the speech and language resource base are integrated well into the academic and enrichment activities of the whole school. These views were echoed by a parent who said: 'There are very strong values of respect and tolerance in the school and I believe that this school has given my children an excellent preparation for their future lives.'

After the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching by making better use of strong practice within the school. You have successfully tackled this. Stronger teachers are used regularly to support colleagues to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. You were also asked to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment across the school. Progress in writing and reading is now strong, and by introducing greater challenge in mathematics, the pace of learning and progress in lessons has improved. You have provided further training for staff and have focused greater attention on speeding up how quickly pupils can do basic calculations. Consequently, progress in mathematics is now more in line with that of reading and writing.

Governors know the school well and provide a good level of support to leaders. However, their action planning is not focused enough on the school's main priorities for improvement. As a consequence, governors are not able to hold leaders to account as effectively as they might.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They are not complacent, however, and regularly review and sharpen safeguarding procedures over time and in line with current statutory guidance. There are well-established systems for raising safeguarding concerns about pupils. Pupils value the 'worry boxes' available to them. These are opened every day by senior leaders, and issues are followed up painstakingly.

Designated safeguarding adults in school receive additional training to support pupils' mental well-being. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example when working online on the computer. Detailed records are kept of how the school works with other agencies to protect pupils from neglect or abuse.

Checks on the suitability of staff are recorded appropriately. Those responsible for appointing new staff have a clear understanding of safer recruitment procedures.

### **Inspection findings**

- Pupils feel safe in school. They have a very clear sense of right and wrong and are strong advocates for equality within the school. Pupils are very pleased about how staff help them with emotional problems and how they receive the help they need to make good progress in lessons. They feel that teachers are kind and sort out unpleasant behaviour quickly. One child described learning as 'pleasant, not

forceful'.

- You have supported new subject and phase leaders very well. There is a collegiate approach among all staff to help one another be the best teachers they can be. They observe one another teach and give constructive suggestions for improvement. Working in this way is described by staff as 'valuable and constructive' and has led to better teaching and learning.
- Senior leaders have introduced new programmes of work to deepen pupils' understanding of mathematics and to help them persevere when challenged. As a result, pupils work with greater confidence in mathematics and standards are rising. A Year 6 pupil explained: 'The strategies we used didn't work at first, but I used my fractions and decimals knowledge I have learned over the past few weeks and we worked as a team to get it right.' In a very small number of classes, however, the range and challenge of work in mathematics are still not always as they should be. Senior leaders are aware that there is more to be done to ensure that the teaching of mathematics is as effective in every class as the best seen in the school.
- Designated teachers and teaching assistants work specifically with disadvantaged pupils to address gaps in their knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is carefully tracked and early support put in place where needed. As a result, progress is accelerating and the gap in achievement between this group and others is closing rapidly. For example, in 2017, attainment in writing for disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 2 was better than all pupils nationally, both at expected levels and at deeper levels of understanding. At the end of Year 6, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving a high standard in reading was in line with that of all pupils nationally. Leaders are not complacent, however, and realise that standards need to rise in mathematics to reach the same high standards as in writing and reading.
- Over time, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 has been rising, but results dipped in 2017. As a consequence, leaders have made the teaching of phonics and spelling a priority. Most children in the early years and Year 1 use their phonics knowledge confidently to develop their early reading skills. A new reading programme for reluctant or struggling readers has accelerated reading and spelling progress significantly. As a result, pupils in Year 1 are set to reach higher standards next year.
- You have been relentless in tackling pupil absence. Overall attendance levels are now in line with national averages for all but a very few pupils. There is compelling evidence that the school is doing all it can, including using family support and working with outside agencies, to raise pupils' attendance levels.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils quickens and matches that made by other pupils nationally, especially in mathematics
- pupils' progress in mathematics further accelerates to match that seen in reading and writing
- governors' action planning focuses more clearly on priority areas, so that governors have a clearer understanding of what success will look like and are better prepared to hold leaders to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Lynda Welham  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I held several meetings with you and senior and middle leaders. I also met with representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I observed the quality of learning with you in all year groups. I observed behaviour on arrival at school and at playtime. As well as talking to pupils in lessons, I met with a group of pupils from across the school to discuss their learning. Together with middle leaders, I analysed progress in pupils' books.

I considered a range of other evidence, including the school's latest assessment information, the school self-evaluation and improvement plan and governors' action planning. I checked safeguarding procedures and child protection procedures and policies. Parents' views of the school were considered through informal discussions at the beginning of the school day, along with 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of 35 questionnaire responses from staff.