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2 February 2018

Mrs Jane Bird
Headteacher
St Edward's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Bird

Short inspection of St Edward's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school experienced a significant instability in staffing, including at a leadership level, after it joined St Christopher's Multi-Academy Trust in November 2015. For some time, this impeded leaders' efforts to move the school forward.

You have significantly quickened the pace of improvement since your appointment as headteacher at the beginning of this academic year. You are receiving good support from school leaders, local governors and several new teachers. Working effectively as a team, leaders ensure that pupils' good behaviour and enthusiasm for learning continue to be positive features in all classes, reflecting the caring, Christian ethos of the school.

You provide refreshing support and clear direction to your staff and colleagues. In particular, you have worked well with specialist staff across the academy trust to introduce a more consistent and accurate assessment of pupils' developing skills across the school. This is helping teachers to meet pupils' different needs and provide learning that more securely enables pupils to make good progress.

Children make a successful start to their schooling during their time in the Reception class. Teaching in key stage 1 is increasingly continuing to ensure that

pupils make good progress. In recent years, improved teaching of phonics has enabled above-average proportions of pupils to achieve the required level of understanding in phonic screening checks. In turn, this is helping increasing numbers of pupils to develop their reading skills more swiftly than before.

Academy trust leaders have completed rigorous and detailed reviews of the performance of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and of the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Strengthened monitoring by leaders and teachers and additional adult support are now enabling these pupils to make good progress in relation to their starting points and needs.

Pupils respect their teachers, warmly help each other in their learning and enjoy being at school. Consequently, they attend well. Parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed mixed views, including a small number that were neutral or negative. However, most would recommend the school to other parents and carers, and several noted that pupils' progress had improved during this academic year.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. This is evident in the way all staff respect pupils as individuals and take care in meeting their different needs. Teachers and support staff are particularly mindful of pupils considered vulnerable and routinely consult colleagues and external agencies to keep them safe.

School records show that leaders, including governors, undertake rigorous checks of the school's facilities. Teachers carefully assess potential risks before taking pupils on visits out of school. Leaders ensure that all the required safeguarding checks on staff and visitors to the school are completed effectively. Leaders make timely referrals and consult specialist agencies when needed to ensure pupils' health and welfare.

When questioned, older and younger pupils alike indicated that they feel safe at school, 'because we have lots of friends'. Pupils, especially those who act as play leaders and organise equipment and activities at lunchtimes, show that they know how to look after each other. Pupils also commented that, 'adults look after us well and our playtimes are much better organised now than before'. The large majority of those parents who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that their children are well cared for at the school. One parent reflected this view when writing, 'St Edwards has a very strong caring, family feel.'

Inspection findings

- You have rightly identified and are targeting the need to secure consistent and effective teaching of mathematics across key stage 2. You have noted that in previous years, some pupils whose attainment was average at the end of Year 2 did not make quick enough progress. Consequently, they did not meet the raised expectations of the new national curriculum.
- You are now making effective use of teachers' skills to strengthen the quality of

teaching and quicken pupils' progress. My observations of teaching and learning and discussions with pupils in classrooms showed that you are successfully intensifying the focus on deepening pupils' mathematical understanding. When questioned, pupils say that they are doing better now because teachers are challenging them to think and explain their work more.

- Pupils' books showed that they are also recording their work well in response to teachers' raised expectations and challenges. The quality of pupils' current work, including that of pupils whose attainment was average at the end of Year 2, shows their increasing knowledge of basic number facts. Pupils are also showing more interest and confidence when tackling mathematical problems. You recognise, though, that this work needs to be maintained to accelerate pupils' progress and fully deepen their mathematical understanding.
- You recognise that too many pupils have lacked the breadth of vocabulary and comprehension of language needed to fully develop their writing skills. Since the beginning of this academic year, you have been taking effective steps to rectify these weaknesses. Teachers use a variety of strategies to successfully interest pupils and widen their vocabulary. Pupils are inspired to write following discussions about stimulating texts, as in Year 5 for example, when evaluating the specifically magical aspects of a well-known fable. When heard to read and questioned, pupils commented that they are learning more adventurous words. Pupils show improved comprehension when explaining the meaning of words and describing how they choose books that they can read more carefully than in the past. You are fully aware that the need to accelerate the development of pupils' writing skills is still work in progress and needs to be sustained consistently in all classes.
- Observations of current teaching and learning across key stage 1 reflect teachers' improving focus on meeting pupils' different needs. Pupils' work in books shows that most are increasingly making good progress. However, at times, the work that teachers present to pupils, especially some whose previous skills were high for their age, is not sufficiently demanding. For example, some work in mathematics does not challenge pupils to think or reason enough and consequently does not help them to attain at a greater depth. Similarly, teachers do not ensure that pupils write expressively across the range of subjects and this, too, limits pupils' achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- sustain the focus across key stage 2 on accelerating pupils' progress in developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics, so that all pupils deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts
- maintain the drive to extend pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills and further develop their ability to write meaningfully and imaginatively, including across the range of subjects
- ensure that teachers in key stage 1 fully challenge pupils so that more attain high

standards for their age in mathematics and writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Exeter, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other staff who have leadership responsibilities. I met with members of the local governing body and with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. I visited classrooms with you and together we scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and observed lunchtime arrangements. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development. I took account of 22 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online survey and 19 additional written comments by parents. I also took note of four responses to the staff questionnaire.