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Mrs Rachel Peddie
Headteacher
St Ippolyts Church of England Aided Primary School
Ashbrook Lane
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Dear Mrs Peddie

Short inspection of St Ippolyts Church of England Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 the school was judged to be good in November 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 and your leadership team continue to move the school forward quickly. There have been several staffing changes since the last inspection. These have been managed well. New staff have brought fresh ideas and different skills to the school.

You have thorough systems for checking provision. Your own view of school effectiveness is supported well by the evidence I saw during the inspection. You have an accurate view of the strengths of provision and are clear about what still needs improving.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 continues to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Areas for improvement from the last inspection have been tackled well. For example, nearly all pupils met or exceeded the expected standard in spelling, grammar and punctuation tests at the end of Year 6 in 2017 because skills are now being taught more systematically than in the past.

Staff are clear about what you are trying to achieve and are positive about your leadership. You and your staff place the pupils' well-being and academic progress at the heart of everything you do. Together, you welcome pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. You do your utmost to meet their diverse needs. As a result of this, they flourish both socially and academically.

Your pupils are brilliant ambassadors for the school. Their conduct at playtime and lunchtime is exemplary. They are polite and courteous to visitors. Pupils show good concern for each other and have a good understanding of why rules are important. They respond quickly to instructions and work hard nearly all of the time.

The school teaches important personal qualities through its 'values education'. Staff model tolerance, respect and kindness in their interactions with each other and the pupils. Consequently, you are producing well-rounded and confident pupils who are well prepared for later life.

Pupils very keenly take responsibility, for example by being buddies or play leaders or by leading acts of worship. The school council gives pupils a good voice in the life of the school and introduces them to the concept of democracy. Pupils are pleased that their views are listened to and acted upon.

Pupils greatly enjoy school. They like the way that you make learning fun and engaging through the imaginative use of trips and 'special days'. The curriculum includes a good focus on creativity and sport. The high-quality artwork on display in the entrance hall shows the extremely positive effect of your recent 'Art Day' on the topic of India.

We talked about the responses to Parent View, the Ofsted parent survey. While a large majority would recommend the school to other parents and carers, not all would. You know that you will need to continue to work with the parent body to ensure that all understand what you are trying to achieve and how.

One area of concern raised by parents was the information they receive on their children's progress. I found that the school provides a good range of information to parents about life in school and their children's learning. Annual reports at the end of each year are extremely detailed and there are regular parent consultation meetings for face-to-face discussions.

An area of the school that parents are especially positive about is the early years provision. I agree that children get off to a very strong start in the Reception class. Adults plan an exciting range of activities, both indoors and outdoors, that meet children's differing needs well, helping them to make good progress. Consequently, attainment at the end of the Reception Year has been above average for the last three years.

Governors know the school well. You keep them well informed so that they can provide the right level of support and challenge. They produce a very comprehensive report at the end of each year, which captures accurately what life is like in school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders and the governing body ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and promote a vigilant and effective culture of safeguarding

throughout the school. Policies and vetting procedures for staff are reviewed systematically and systems to check visitors are rigorous. Teaching, support and administrative staff are well trained and vigilant in looking for potential problems. Both governors and staff carry out regular reviews of the school's policies and adapt them when needed.

Parents are very happy with the quality of care provided by the school. Pupils are very clear that they are kept safe. They know how to avoid danger outside school. For example, older pupils explain knowledgably that some social media sites have age limits and why it is important to stick to these.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we met together to confirm the key lines of enquiry for my day in school.
- The first of these was how well the curriculum meets the needs of pupils. I wanted to look at this because you have several mixed-age classes. I found that you have effectively adapted the curriculum in the current year to take account of your increased intake and the subsequent changes in the make-up of classes. This has ensured that there is good coverage of the curriculum.
- Teachers' planning is thorough and generally takes good account of the differing needs of pupils or groups of pupils. However, there are variations in the quality of pupils' work in history and geography. While these subjects are taught regularly, work is not always sufficiently challenging for all groups of pupils or of a consistently high quality to enable pupils to develop a full range of skills, knowledge and understanding. We agreed that this is an area you should focus on improving.
- My second line of enquiry looked at the progress of boys, especially in mathematics, in key stage 1. This was a focus because there was a comparatively large gap in the attainment of boys in national assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2017.
- I looked in detail at the progress of boys and girls across the school. It is clear that the differences in the attainment of boys and girls from year to year reflect the different nature of year groups rather than any weaknesses in provision.
- I sampled a range of books from different year groups and could see that boys and girls make the same progress over time in English and mathematics. While boys in Year 2 in 2017 attained less well than girls, this reflected lower starting points. These pupils are being supported well in Year 3 to help them catch up. This is being managed well by the skilled inclusion coordinator.
- We also agreed to check whether teaching provided the right levels of challenge for pupils. This was identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection.
- Our visits to lessons, school data and a scrutiny of books show that teaching is suitably challenging, including for the most able, and enables pupils to make good progress, especially in reading and writing.
- Your own data shows that pupils' progress in mathematics is slightly slower than

progress in reading and writing. This is because the subject has a lower profile around school in displays and through the provision of specific working areas. In addition, teachers do not make consistently strong use of available resources to enable pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 to practise and reinforce new skills and concepts. Senior leaders had already identified this issue for themselves in recent visits to lessons.

- As part of this focus, I also looked at homework because not all parents are happy with current arrangements. You talked to me about how the school has adapted homework in the current year and continues to tweak it to take account of the views of parents. I found, and pupils confirmed, that most homework is interesting and engaging. It is well linked to topics being taught in class and often involves practical activities, such as making models or carrying out research. This is the aspect of homework that is most enjoyed by pupils. As one commented, 'Our new homework is fun!'
- You asked me to look at the impact of your middle leadership team because this has been a recent school focus.
- I found that middle leaders in English and mathematics have a good effect on learning. They play a good part in monitoring provision and improving teaching. The drive for improvement has been especially effective in English. Initiatives such as the introduction of different ways of encouraging pupils to read more regularly and activities such as a focus on improving their vocabulary through the 'Word of the Week' are ensuring that progress is especially strong in reading and writing.
- Leadership in subjects beyond English and mathematics is developing well. In science, history and geography, new leaders have already got a clear picture of what they need to improve. A good start has been made to securing this, for example by introducing new assessment systems in these subjects so that progress can be monitored more closely than in the past.
- Finally, as part of my checks on safeguarding, I looked at how well the school tackles bullying. This was a concern raised by some parents.
- The school has good systems for tackling bullying or falling out. Pupils confirm this. They said that there is occasional falling out but they are very confident that any problems will be sorted out quickly by staff. Consequently, they said that they feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they have a worry. As one commented, 'If you have a problem you can tell an adult and they will help you to find a solution.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make as consistently good progress in mathematics as they do in reading and writing
- pupils' work in history and geography provides the right level of challenge for

different ability groups and covers topics in sufficient detail to enable them to gain a full range of skills, knowledge and understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I made observations of teaching and learning across the school during learning walks with you. I held meetings with school leaders and members of the governing body. I had discussions with parents at the start of the school day and scrutinised the 67 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I analysed the 19 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and six responses to the pupil survey. I considered a range of information supplied by the school, including checks on the quality of teaching, the school's development plan, school policies and records relating to attendance and safeguarding procedures. I listened to some pupils reading in lessons and scrutinised school assessment information and pupils' books in different subjects from the current academic year.