

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



26 February 2018

Mr Nick Kiddle
Headteacher
St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Kings Way
Lyme Regis
Dorset
DT7 3DY

Dear Mr Kiddle

Short inspection of St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Lyme Regis

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 school was judged to be good in March 2013.

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.**

Following the previous inspection, standards of teaching declined, as did pupils' performance by the time they left the school. Published data for 2016 and 2017 shows that pupils' progress during key stage 2 was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Since your appointment in September 2016, your systematic approach is tackling any legacy of underperformance and raising expectations at the school. Parents, carers and, especially, staff recognise the positive difference your leadership is making. For all who work at your school, it is a very happy place where pupils play together full of enthusiasm and enjoyment. All staff used the words 'togetherness' and 'teamwork' when describing the culture of your school; these features contribute strongly to the school's welcoming atmosphere. Your dedication combines well with that of your spirited team. Together, you show the collective ambition to help pupils successfully overcome any barriers they may face. Staff morale is high and pupils experience an environment where laughter fills the classrooms, echoes down the corridors and cascades around the staffroom.

You recognise that the school was too slow to raise teachers' subject knowledge, expectations and assessment to accompany the new national curriculum in 2014. Consequently, results in 2016 and 2017 lagged behind those seen nationally.

Teachers did not use information about the attainment and progress of pupils to plan for pupils' next steps in learning. The good start children made in Reception and key stage 1 was not built on sufficiently during key stage 2. Your actions are improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning but some inconsistencies remain. You are aware that more improvement and greater consistency are required to ensure that teaching exerts maximum impact on pupils' learning.

Your leaders for English and mathematics undertook a thorough review of pupils' performance in 2017. They are using the findings to develop the systems and processes needed to improve outcomes and make teachers accountable for their pupils' performance. Staff fully share your view of the impact the pupil premium spending should have on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than previously. Where teachers have grasped the initiatives and fully embraced the training opportunities presented, the quality of provision and pupils' outcomes are improving rapidly.

You continue to focus on the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection in 2013. However, these have not been fully rectified. Teaching remains too inconsistent, so pupils' progress is too variable. It speeds up and slows down as pupils move through the school, slowing down most notably in Year 6. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their understanding of what makes a successful learner are improving, although some remain too passive in their approach. A few pupils in Year 6 report that if they asked for help, for example with their reading, they would be laughed at by their peers.

Safeguarding is effective.

All involved in the school community are highly committed to keeping pupils safe. You have developed a culture where all staff are vigilant about the safety of pupils. Staff are perceptive in identifying when pupils could be at risk of harm from the moment they start at pre-school. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date, regular and welcomed, enabling staff and governors to fully discharge their duties. Staff are therefore prompt and confident in reporting any concerns. Pupils and parents are confident that issues are followed up.

Your strong emphasis on pupils' personal development promotes a culture where respect and courtesy are the norms. You have effective links with outside agencies to cater for any vulnerable pupils. Pupils trust staff to listen to their concerns, particularly the family liaison worker, due to the very positive relationships across the school community. Pupils know how to use the internet and social media safely and responsibly and understand that the school is a safe and harmonious community. Governors regularly check that the school's safeguarding processes are working well and that all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who wish to work with children are suitable. Overall, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused our attention on key stage 2. We agreed to focus on how well middle-ability pupils, boys and disadvantaged pupils were progressing in reading, writing and mathematics. We also looked at how well you use the findings from monitoring to drive improvements.
- The subject leader for mathematics has a good understanding of the requirements of the national curriculum in mathematics. Some good mathematical practice exists, for instance in Years 3 and 4. Good questions such as 'How do you know?' 'Why do you think that?' and 'What do we know about how numbers work to solve this?' challenge pupils to make good progress in developing their reasoning skills. However, the school's chosen approach to developing pupils' conceptual understanding is not yet applied consistently across all year groups in the school.
- The curriculum in mathematics is not enabling older pupils of middle ability to reach the standards they are capable of. In Years 5 and 6, concepts are not developed deeply enough for these pupils. Topics jump from one area of mathematics to another too quickly. As a result, not enough of these pupils are progressing as well as younger pupils are. Teachers' weaker subject knowledge of mathematics leads to work that lacks challenge or is too repetitive. This is evident in pupils' mathematics books where activities do not build sufficiently on pupils' prior knowledge, skill and understanding.
- The English subject leader has an accurate picture of the quality of reading across the school. Whole-school systems for the tracking of pupils' reading development are being established. Older 'free readers' (those who no longer need the support of a structured reading scheme) are often left to choose their own books. However, some are not checked carefully enough to ensure that their books are appropriate and contribute to pupils' progress in reading. Some Year 6 pupils do not display positive attitudes to reading and are reluctant to read aloud.
- The teaching of reading places insufficient emphasis on the ability of pupils to understand and comprehend what they are reading. Activities for younger pupils help them to successfully decode the sounds that letters make. Pupils therefore become mechanically fluent when reading. However, their reading becomes hesitant and fragmented when presented with more complex words that do not conform to typical phonetic patterns. In addition, older pupils are lacking deeper understanding of themes, language conventions, inference and deduction.
- Work in pupils' books shows that disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in writing during Years 3 to 5. In these instances, the technical aspects of language are used alongside high-quality fiction and non-fiction texts. Bright, engaging activities stimulate pupils' interest and motivate them to write well for a range of purposes. Pupils become confident in using words, sentences and punctuation for effect.
- In Year 6, some writing activities lack purpose. Lessons appear to be 'one-off' sessions that do not build on pupils' prior knowledge, skill or understanding. Taught aspects of spelling, punctuation and grammar are not used to improve pupils' writing. Weak subject knowledge results in planned activities that do not

meet the needs of pupils well enough; nor does it ensure that expectations are high enough to meet the standards of which pupils are capable.

- You and subject leaders for English and mathematics plan and conduct regular monitoring activities which provide a significant amount of information. To date, activities have focused on policies and procedures that ensure staff are complying with agreed approaches. The findings from monitoring do not place enough emphasis on the progress pupils are making. Therefore, leaders, including governors, have been unable to conduct an even more penetrating analysis of pupils' performance or be more stringent in holding staff accountable for pupils' achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum for mathematics supports pupils' development of conceptual understanding alongside their reasoning and problem-solving skills
- teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics improves
- the consistency and quality of teaching writing improve in line with the school's chosen approach
- pupils' reading comprehension, inference and deduction skills are improved, especially for boys
- monitoring activities place a sharp focus on pupils' progress and the findings are used to improve teaching and the curriculum and hold staff firmly to account for pupils' performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and leaders for English and mathematics. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. I also met with all teaching assistants and teachers to discuss their views of the school. The views of a number of parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I carried out visits to key stage 2 classes jointly with the leaders for English and mathematics and spoke with pupils about their work. Together, we looked at a range of pupils' work to review their performance over time. I listened to some key stage 2 pupils reading to a known adult. I evaluated a range of documentary evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding, monitoring and governance.