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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs G Thomson
Headteacher
St Matthew's Church of England Primary School
Church Road
Cainscross
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL5 4JE

Dear Mrs Thomson

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

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 February 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.**

The proportion of children in the early years achieving expected standards has risen to be in line with that of children nationally. Improvements to the teaching of phonics have resulted in a higher proportion of pupils achieving expected standards at the end of Year 1 than previously. Effective teaching in key stage 1 results in good achievement in all subjects at the end of the key stage, broadly in line with pupils nationally. However, fewer pupils achieve higher standards. Effective teaching of reading and writing in key stage 2 leads to achievement in line with, and often well above, that of pupils nationally. However, pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics. Fewer pupils achieve higher standards in writing and mathematics than found nationally.

You accurately evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses, which helps you to set targets to improve outcomes for pupils. You and other leaders, including governors, regularly undertake a range of activities to check the effectiveness of the quality of teaching. This helps you to hold staff to account and take action when teaching needs to improve. Your identification that teaching needs to improve in the early years and that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities must make swifter progress to catch up is accurate. You agree it will be necessary to sustain improvements in mathematics so that pupils

make consistently strong progress. You are clear that tracking the progress of the most able pupils will help you to check that they are routinely achieving the highest standards they are capable of.

Staff's, parents and carers', and pupils' responses to the online questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive. Nearly all parents agreed that the school supports their children well and typically comment, 'Leaders are extremely supportive, positive and hugely encouraging' and, 'This is a lovely school where everyone is made to feel so very welcome'. The majority of pupils said they enjoy school and that teachers help them to do their best. Staff stated that they are motivated, proud to be part of the school and feel well supported by leaders. Pupils are well mannered and welcoming. Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning, This supports positive working relationships with them. Teachers give clear explanations and pupils settle to work quickly, which helps most pupils to make steady and sometimes strong progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You are committed to supporting pupils' safety and well-being. You use your insightful knowledge of your pupils to forge successful partnerships with parents and provide valuable support to help pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour. Parents appreciate your help, commenting, 'school leaders make you feel that you are not alone' and 'the school has gone above and beyond to support my child's emotional well-being'. Pupils feel safe in school and value going to the 'Den' or the 'Tree House' when they need to calm down.

You have robust safeguarding procedures and provide staff with regular updates to training. This ensures that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. You keep detailed and confidential records of referrals and do not hesitate to seek advice from external agencies or escalate concerns when pupils need extra help. This assures you that you are doing all you can to keep pupils safe. You routinely evaluate your actions to determine if they are effective.

You undertake all the necessary checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with pupils and record this information on the school's single central record. You have clear procedures for administering medicines and first aid, which helps you to support pupils' health and well-being. You undertake robust risk assessments to make sure that all pupils are safe on trips.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that my first line of enquiry would be to determine how leaders have improved teaching in the early years and if this is being sustained. This is because over time fewer children, including disadvantaged children, reach expected standards than children nationally. Over the last few years, achievement has improved each year. Last year, the proportion of children achieving expected standards rose to a position in line with children nationally. This meant that more children were well prepared to make the transition into Year 1 than previously.

However, when compared to children nationally, fewer children exceed the standards expected of them in the early years.

- You have made some staffing changes this year and the early years leader who previously taught in Reception now teaches in Year 1. She is supporting the new teacher in Reception. Our discussions and learning walks revealed that current assessment in the early years does not identify precisely how well children are doing. This means that teaching does not sharply focus on developing children's skills across a range of areas of learning. Learning activities fail to motivate children to explore their environment or sustain concentration to find things out for themselves. Consequently, they move from one activity to another, which limits their ability to consolidate learning. Adults do not intervene swiftly enough to support children's learning or behaviour and as a result, at times, some children ignore instructions. This limits what children can achieve. Our discussions confirmed that you are aware of this issue and are determined to support and develop early years leadership and improve teaching.
- My second line of enquiry was to investigate the effectiveness of leaders' support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is because over time few of these pupils, particularly pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, reach expected or higher standards at the end of each key stage. We undertook a learning walk and reviewed additional teaching support, which is clearly having a positive impact on helping pupils understand what to do and to learn. Pupils enjoy this extra help and confirm it is making a positive difference. Together, we reviewed your most recent assessment information and pupils' workbooks which reveal that groups of pupils make inconsistent progress. Improvements to teaching are not fully embedded and, as a result, several pupils are working at standards below those expected for their age. You recognise the importance of continuing to provide well-targeted support to sustain improvements to help pupils to catch up.
- The next line of enquiry was to establish what actions leaders are taking to raise standards of teaching in mathematics at key stage 2. This is because over time fewer pupils achieve expected or higher standards in mathematics at the end of the key stage than in other subjects. You have reviewed the way you teach mathematics, which is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning. Work is usually well planned to meet the needs of pupils. They enjoy undertaking work of different degrees of difficulty, which encourages them to apply and deepen their mathematical thinking.
- Teaching builds on pupils' prior learning which supports pupils to develop their thinking, apply their reasoning skills and solve problems. Pupils can accurately and confidently explain their calculation methods. There is 'buzz' of activity as pupils settle to work because they find learning exciting and are keen to challenge themselves. Teachers mostly intervene in pupils' learning, encouraging pupils to 'hop up' to the next challenge, which consolidates and extends their understanding. However, at times, teachers do not take full account of what pupils can already do and provide work that is not matched to their ability. As a result, pupils are not routinely challenged to achieve the very highest standards.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use robust assessment to consistently plan work that accelerates pupils' progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that pupils catch up quickly
- teachers consistently provide sufficiently challenging work in mathematics, especially for the most able pupils, so that pupils achieve of their full potential
- leaders support teachers to make accurate use of assessment in the early years, and provide exciting learning opportunities which promote positive attitudes to learning and help children make strong progress
- they develop early years leadership so that leaders know when to intervene to improve teaching and ensure that children, particularly disadvantaged children, consistently achieve what they are capable of.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Beeks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

You and the deputy headteacher were jointly involved in all activities undertaken as part of the inspection. I also met with the leader responsible for early years to discuss early years assessment information and to carry out a joint learning walk. During the inspection, I reviewed the school's single central record and we discussed safeguarding training, referral procedures and how you support pupils' welfare. You also provided some case studies for me to review.

We discussed the school's most recent assessment information and I looked at the school's self-evaluation summary and development plan. I met with the chair of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with two advisers from the local authority. I spoke with pupils in lessons, during break and lunchtime and also met with 11 key stage 2 pupils from all year groups. I reviewed pupils' workbooks in lessons and you and the deputy headteacher joined me in a separate scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics and English. Together, we undertook a learning walk to review learning in mathematics in key stage 2.

I talked to several parents at the beginning of the school day and considered 43 responses to the online survey Parent View, along with 22 additional free-text

comments. I reviewed 19 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 68 responses to the online pupil survey.