

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Stuart Calvert  
Headteacher  
Marchwood Church of England Infant School  
Twiggs Lane  
Marchwood  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO40 4ZE

Dear Mr Calvert

### **Short inspection of Marchwood Church of England Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 October 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 led the school with positivity, empathy and care since 2010. In the last two years you have strengthened your leadership team, who are determined, capable and increasingly effective. Staff, governors and parents have confidence in the school's leadership. As one parent said, 'The headteacher is very approachable, makes himself available to parents and carers, and addresses any concerns.'

Pupils present as happy, eager individuals who enjoy learning and behave well. Pupils play together excitedly at playtimes and work cooperatively during lessons. The school environment is bright and cheerful, with British and Christian values shining throughout school. For example, the 'happy club' recently visited the local church to share the things of which they are proud. The school's strong links with the British armed forces are celebrated, for example, through a recent project where pupils were invited to share pictures of family members who serve in the armed forces. One pupil touchingly drew a picture of a parent in uniform with the caption, 'My mummy saves the world.' Collective worship is also a key feature of the school and valued by all as a special time to come together to exemplify the school's Christian values of 'love, trust, truth'. Through such opportunities your school is developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very well.

Since the last inspection there have been some changes in staffing, with several

long-serving staff retiring. You have overseen the changes well. New staff say that they feel very welcome, commenting on the family atmosphere of the school and the dedication of your team to ensure that pupils are happy and learning. This results in a harmonious community, which is also reflected in the positive relationships between staff and pupils. Parents recognise and praise teachers' hard work, several commenting that staff have gone out of their way to help their child settle in to school. One summed up the views of many: 'Staff build good relationships with the children. My child has flourished and loves going to school.'

Since the last inspection, pupils have continued to make good progress across a broad range of subjects. A higher than average proportion of children consistently achieve a good level of development by the end of their time in the early years. Similarly, an above-average proportion of pupils reach the standard of the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1. Over time, most pupils achieve expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1.

In 2016, there was a slight dip in standards at the end of key stage 1. Ably assisted by your deputy headteacher, and with valuable support from the local authority, you responded to this well so that the quality of teaching improved. Consequently standards throughout key stage 1 have risen since 2016, particularly in reading. In 2017, an above-average proportion of pupils achieved the expected and greater depth standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Most disadvantaged pupils achieve standards similar to others nationally, and an increasing proportion achieve the greater depth standard. However, you recognise that there is more to be done to accelerate pupils' progress throughout their time in school, so that a higher percentage reach the greater depth standard.

Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Governors have a broad range of skills which they use well to support and challenge leaders to evaluate and improve the school constantly. As a result, the improvements requested at the last Ofsted inspection have been largely achieved, as teaching considers pupils' individual starting points and needs more carefully. Pupils are clear also on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Your plans for the future are well judged and under way, including the need to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve in each year group, and to ensure that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable achieve well. During the inspection, it also became clear that the school's efforts to highlight the importance of regular attendance with parents continue to be a priority.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that there is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. You have made sure that recruitment procedures and checks on adults working and volunteering in the school are robust and thorough. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures. They know the signs to look out for that may indicate that a child needs help. Records show that they report concerns promptly and fully. You

liaise well with external agencies when appropriate, so that pupils get the extra care that they need.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare and there is always an adult to talk to if they are concerned about anything. The curriculum includes frequent opportunities for pupils to consider how to keep safe, including through practising fire drills and understanding road safety and e-safety. Parents agree, praising particularly how effective staff are at helping to sort any issues where a child may be upset or need help.

## **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection my focus areas were: how well leaders have improved the quality of teaching, including to ensure that vulnerable pupils make good progress; whether leaders are ensuring that most-able pupils make good progress; how well leaders are improving attendance; and how effectively the school teaches writing, particularly to boys.
- After a dip in standards in 2016, leaders reassessed their expectations of teaching. The resulting positive culture among staff enables them to work together effectively and seek to improve their professional practice continuously. Staff value the opportunities to research and share the best practice, particularly through the training and support provided by the local authority and deputy headteacher. Staff now have better ownership of pupils' progress information, which they use to plan learning that challenges pupils to progress more effectively. Your new middle leaders are monitoring the effectiveness of teaching increasingly well, providing an additional layer of support and scrutiny. Consequently, teaching has improved rapidly. Teaching is increasingly well organised, with learning opportunities which interest pupils and help them to make good progress across a broad range of subjects. Teachers know pupils well and now have a better understanding of the progress they should be making throughout their time in school. The initial impact of these changes has been seen in the 2017 key stage 1 results, where pupils' rates of progress improved, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and in reading. Rightly, you are now consolidating these changes to ensure that teaching is consistently strong and effective throughout the school.
- You have re-evaluated the use of teaching assistants, changing how they work so that they now have a greater impact on pupils' progress, particularly for those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. You have, wisely, ensured that your register of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities more accurately reflects pupils' different needs, so that more precise and effective support can be provided. You regularly review the effectiveness of additional support, so that you are sure that funding is being used where it has the most impact on pupils' outcomes. Teaching assistants say that they feel valued as part of the team. Communication between staff has improved and there is now a shared understanding of how everyone's work plays a valuable part in all pupils making good progress. The progress of current pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved as a result of your work.

- As part of the revitalising of teaching you are, rightly, concentrating on ensuring that the most able pupils achieve highly throughout the school. Teachers' improved knowledge of pupils' starting points, and their new approach to planning, mean that they now consider more carefully how to ensure that this group of pupils are challenged to achieve their potential as they progress through the school. The initial impact of this work can be seen in pupils' good progress in reading, particularly for the most able disadvantaged pupils. Ensuring that teaching consistently challenges the most able pupils is, rightly, an ongoing focus.
- Leaders and governors ensure that additional funding to support the needs of service children is used effectively. You liaise well with the local army base and service families so that you can provide timely support for any pupils who may be missing absent family members who are serving abroad. You make sure that you know what pupils have and have not studied previously, should they join the school part way through the key stage, addressing any gaps in knowledge and understanding promptly. A recent project to share the different cultural experiences of pupils and their families, was welcomed by all. The resulting 'Fijian Rugby Book' produced by the pupils and their parents is particularly impressive.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. However, last year you noticed a rise in pupils' absence, including for disadvantaged pupils. You have taken prompt action to address this. You track attendance well, so that you are able to tackle the different reasons for absence effectively. In school, you have revamped your procedures, for example for highlighting with parents the effect of absence on pupils' well-being and progress. You also now provide parents with more regular information about pupils' attendance, so that they know if it is slipping and can act to make improvements. You utilise the services of the educational welfare officer effectively, to work with families whose children have especially low attendance. Your actions are starting to have an impact. However, you know that there is more to be done to reverse fully the slight rise in absence.
- You recognise that, over time, boys have not achieved as highly in writing as have girls. You have changed the way that writing is taught, paying particular attention to how projects are structured so that boys especially are enthused by the topics and books studied. You make sure that their attention is grabbed right from the start of a project. Learning is scaffolded carefully, so that any final product is of high quality. This is working well. Pupils eagerly showed me their writing. Year 2 pupils enthused about the superheroes that they had invented and Year 1 pupils told me in detail about what it was like to 'think like a bear' and then 'write like a bear'. Pupils' work at key stage 1, including boys', shows that they are productive writers, and that you expect high-quality writing across the whole curriculum. However, in the early years, although lots of opportunities are provided for boys to write, you recognise that refinement in planning is needed to ensure that these are precisely matched to children's interests, including in the outdoor areas.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance continues to improve, including for disadvantaged pupils
- the recent changes to strengthen the quality of teaching lead to consistently high levels of challenge for all groups of pupils and for all year groups, so that pupils make outstanding rates of progress throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, other leaders, governors, teachers and pupils, and also spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. Together, we observed teaching across a range of year groups and I observed pupils during playtimes. With leaders, I scrutinised a range of pupils' work and discussed pupils' progress. Parents' views were taken into account through face-to-face informal discussions before school and the 50 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also took account of 20 survey responses submitted by staff. I checked records and documentation relating to safeguarding, attendance, meetings, monitoring and improvement. I reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.