

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 March 2018

Mrs Anna McGuire
Headteacher
St Pauls Church of England Academy
Robert Road
Tipton
West Midlands
DY4 9BH

Dear Mrs McGuire

Short inspection of St Pauls Church of England Academy

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 December 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In 2015, the school became an academy. You and the governing body have created a strong nurturing environment where pupils enjoy learning and feel supported and safe.

You are supported well by senior leaders. You recently established a new leadership structure in the school. You identified new roles for senior and middle leaders. In their roles, leaders at all levels now have developed a better understanding of how pupils are progressing as they move through school.

Governors are an important part of the successful leadership of the school. They complement the work of your leadership team well. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for further improvement through a range of information available to them about school performance. They ask relevant questions about key groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, and are effective in holding the school to account.

Your plans for improvement are thorough, tightly focused on the right priorities and are already showing signs of success. This is especially so in reading and the progress of disadvantaged pupils, which are rightly your priorities this year.

The large majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school and say that their children achieve well. Parents who made their views known believe that their children are well looked after. They also appreciate the care, guidance and support

that their children receive from you and your staff. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very pleased with the way their children settle in so quickly and the progress that they make.

Pupils' books and the abundance of high-quality displays of work around school reflect the broad curriculum that captures pupils' interest. Educational visits and visitors and a wide range of extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' learning. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about these and named various subjects as favourites. The early years curriculum is planned around children's interests.

Behaviour for learning is well developed. Poor behaviour and disruption to learning are very rare. The school has robust procedures and record-keeping to monitor behaviour. Reward systems are clear and uniform throughout the school.

Despite the previous inspection being eight years ago, you have addressed the areas identified at the last inspection. Children in the early years achieve well and engage in learning activities with high levels of concentration. Adult intervention is purposeful and children work with independence. Role-play areas help the children develop their communication and social skills. Children have access to a wide range of creative and challenging activities that target specific skills. The outdoor environment is easily accessible and used effectively to extend learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks, vetting and recruitment practices are robust. Staff receive advice and information about safeguarding as part of their induction. Detailed training for all staff takes place annually throughout the school year. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about how to keep children safe.

Pupils say that they feel safe. All of the pupils I spoke to, and those who responded to the online questionnaire, say that they feel safe. They are supervised well at play on a very well-resourced site which is checked frequently so that any safety issues are resolved without delay. Thorough risk assessments are carried out prior to any trips and visits. Pupils recall what they have learned in lessons that have a focus on safety. Pupils understand the different types of bullying that exist but say that there are few examples of it in school.

Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. They undertake regular safeguarding training to ensure that they are well informed. The chair of the governing body frequently checks systems for vetting all new members of staff and volunteers.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked particularly at pupils' reading progress in key stage 2, how effectively middle-attaining pupils are challenged in reading and how well pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils.

- Although pupils' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 was above the national average in 2017, progress was significantly lower than the national average. In response, you have raised the profile of reading across the school and developed a strong reading culture. During the inspection, pupils talked about how they are encouraged and supported to read regularly. Pupils I heard read did so with confidence and read fluently and with expression, using their phonics skills to help them to recognise words. Children are showing that they are able to answer questions about what they have read and give reasons for their answers. They are at the early stages of being able to infer and deduct meaning from texts. However, questioning does not always prompt pupils to think more deeply so that they make connections across areas of learning and begin to develop their own, independent ideas about the subject at hand.
- Leaders and governors have correctly identified the progress made by disadvantaged pupils as an area for development. You reanalysed last year's statutory tests for reading, writing and mathematics as they had not included pupils entering the school without measures from their key stage 1 statutory tests. Although the results of this work improved the overall progress measures, progress of disadvantaged pupils was still below the progress nationally in reading.
- Disadvantaged pupils have benefited from increased one-to-one or small-group support across the curriculum through the employment of additional adults. Historical inconsistencies in the quality of teaching of reading across key stage 2 mean that some disadvantaged pupils have not made the accelerated progress that is needed for them to catch up with their peers nationally in reading. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving but they have still not caught up with their peers.
- Current pupils are making improved progress in mathematics across the school. You have reviewed the way you teach mathematics, which is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils now have a clear understanding of what they are learning. Our visits to classrooms and work in books showed that pupils are getting more frequent opportunities to reason and to apply their skills to solve mathematical problems.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils experience a range of subjects as part of their usual timetable. As many pupils as possible are included in the wide range of vibrant extra-curricular activities that you provide, in and out of school. This provision is enhanced by the physical education (PE) and sport premium which has been used to employ high-quality sports coaches. The coaches organise games and activities during lunch and playtimes and sports after school. This has a positive impact on the health and participation of pupils in school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- high-quality teaching is consistent, to ensure that all groups of pupils, in

particular disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in reading

- the quality of teachers' questioning is improved so that it encourages pupils to think more deeply and develop their oral communication skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Max Vlahakis
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your vice-principal and your assistant principal. I met with three governors, including the chair. I spoke with your local authority adviser who supports the school. I spoke informally to pupils on the playground and in lessons and to parents after school. I looked at the 51 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and surveys of staff and pupils' views. We visited lessons together. I looked at the work in a selection of pupils' books. I considered the school's self-evaluation and leaders' plans for development. I took into account evidence of pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress. I read with children from Years 3 and 6. I read a range of school policies, including those for safeguarding and child protection.