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Mrs Elizabeth Wilson-Chalon
Headteacher
Martock Church of England VA Primary School
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Dear Mrs Wilson-Chalon

Short inspection of Martock Church of England VA Primary School

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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, the school is a sanctuary for pupils to learn and grow into polite and caring citizens. Pupils are industrious in lessons and enjoy school. The vast majority of parents and carers share pupils' positive views of the school. They value the wide range of clubs and activities that the school provides. Views commonly expressed by parents include, 'Every year is a memorable year for my child because the school makes learning fun.'

You and your deputy headteacher lead a team of enthusiastic and dedicated staff. You lead with vision and clearly articulate your high expectations. Consequently, all staff understand their roles and are keen to do their best for every pupil. Leaders have made sure that staff training has improved the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, standards continue to strengthen and more pupils reach the expected standards for their age compared to national averages.

Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge for leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your detailed reports help to provide governors with a good understanding of the school's effectiveness. Governors use their professional skills to keep a close watch on pupils' progress and to ensure that actions lead to continued improving standards.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous

inspection. Leaders have enhanced the early years outdoor provision so that children can learn in a more stimulating and purposeful environment. You were also asked to provide opportunities for pupils to apply their calculation strategies to solve problems. This formed one of my lines of enquiry below.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team do all that can be done to support pupils' safety and welfare. Staff forge successful partnerships with parents and provide them with valuable support and information about their children's progress. Your pastoral lead has developed a strong network of external support, which helps pupils and their families to receive the help they need in a timely manner.

You undertake all the necessary checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with pupils. Staff undertake robust risk assessments to make sure that all pupils are safe on trips. You routinely evaluate your actions to determine whether they are effective.

You have robust safeguarding procedures and provide staff with regular updates to training. Consequently, staff recognise that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. Your staff show vigilance in reporting their concerns. You keep detailed and confidential records and escalate concerns when pupils need extra help.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on pupils' behaviour and welfare. Historically, attendance has been low and exclusions high. Pupils' overall attendance has improved to be in line with the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains too high. The majority of these pupils are too young to take themselves to school. You have not shied away from difficult decisions and have issued penalty notices when holidays are taken in term time. However, you recognise that there is still more to do to make sure that the most vulnerable pupils, who are persistently absent from school, attend regularly.
- The number of exclusions has also been high. You have taken effective action so that exclusions have now reduced considerably. You have been effective in seeking the advice and guidance of external agencies so that staff can better support the few pupils who have considerable emotional needs. Pupils' conduct is good. Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare. Pupils are confident that if any bullying occurs staff would deal with it quickly and effectively.
- Secondly, I looked at the effectiveness of the teaching of mathematics, and, in particular, at how pupils apply calculation strategies to solve problems. The proportion of pupils reaching the highest standards in mathematics in 2017 was below the national average at key stage 2. The mathematics leader has worked effectively to oversee improvements in this subject. She has supported teachers' improved subject knowledge. Teachers provide pupils with challenging tasks. Pupils are now competent in applying their calculation skills to solve problems.

Work in books shows that more pupils are now working at the higher standards.

- Next, I explored the quality of teaching and learning in writing. Pupils achieve exceptionally well in writing. They consistently exceed national averages, including the proportion of disadvantaged writers who reach the higher standards. The leadership of writing is strong. In particular, leaders have provided staff training, which has been effective in securing their good subject knowledge. Teachers ensure that writing skills are incorporated seamlessly across different areas of the curriculum. Consequently, pupils practise and apply their writing skills for different purposes. Pupils' effective use of vocabulary engages the reader and reflects their extensive reading.
- Governors make effective use of the pupil premium funding to remove barriers to disadvantaged pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils who have social and emotional barriers to learning are well supported to make good progress.
- Leaders identified that, although pupils, including the disadvantaged, have a love of reading and read regularly, they sometimes lack the stamina to read and understand more complex texts. Consequently, you have changed the approach to reading and provide many more opportunities for pupils to read and understand demanding texts. More pupils, including the disadvantaged, are now making at least good progress to reach the higher standards.
- Finally, I explored the effectiveness of the identification and support for pupils in key stage 1 who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is because, historically, outcomes show that few of these pupils catch up with their peers by the end of Year 2. With the exception of phonics, the targets set on pupils' individual plans are too broad and do not relate to a close enough assessment of their needs. Consequently, pupils' progress is slow. However, teachers' clear assessment of pupils' phonic skills leads to effective support. Pupils catch up quickly. We agreed that some fine-tuning of assessment processes is needed so that the support provided is equally effective for all pupils, whatever their academic needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the planned support for key stage 1 pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is closely matched to their needs so that they make swift progress to catch up with their peers
- they regularly review the strategies in place to promote good attendance, so that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent continues to reduce.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the inspection. I worked extensively with you and your leadership team, including sampling a range of pupils' work and talking with pupils through inspection activities. I scrutinised safeguarding records, and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I met with your site manager to review the safety of the school site. I held two telephone conversations, one with the school's Somerset education partner and another with a local authority officer. I also spoke with pupils and staff to ascertain their understanding of safeguarding. I evaluated evidence that shows how you work with other agencies to keep children safe. I also reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and records of governors' visits. I met with two members of your governing body. I took full account of the 33 responses on Parent View as well as the free texts received through the inspection. I also considered the outcome of the school's own parent survey.