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Mrs Elizabeth Maycock
Headteacher
Little Waltham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
The Street
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Dear Mrs Maycock

Short inspection of Little Waltham Church of England Voluntary Aided 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You are unequivocal in your vision for the school, which is that all pupils will succeed, no matter what their ability or background. As a result, the school is highly inclusive. Governors and staff are committed to developing the 'whole child'.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to 'make more teaching outstanding and raise achievement'. Since that inspection, the school has grown and the numbers of pupils will have nearly doubled in the next year. School leaders know that teaching is not yet outstanding. You have focused strongly on staff development and sharing good practice, not only within your school but also through effective collaborations with other schools. This includes Ford End Primary, where you are also interim executive headteacher. You have created a strong culture of teamwork among your staff, who value and support your drive for improvements in teaching and learning. You and your senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and have put in place effective monitoring systems and procedures to support further improvement. As a result, all teaching across the school continues to improve.

The school is a vibrant, inviting place, where staff feel valued and pupils do well. The walls are adorned with artwork and photographs of pupils taking part in a wide variety of activities. Pupils enjoy coming to their school. During the inspection a small number of parents raised concerns about behaviour within the school.

However, pupils who were observed were on task, got on well and were polite. In discussions with pupils, they were confident that behaviour was good or, if someone was unkind, that staff would help. Pupils' online survey showed that a small minority of children feel that sometimes adults aren't as good as they would like them to be to help resolve problems.

The staff survey responses were universally positive and they reflect the complete confidence that staff have in your leadership.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders carry out comprehensive checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Staff and governors undertake frequent training so they understand their roles and responsibilities. Record-keeping is of a high quality. Senior leaders and staff know children and their families extremely well. You make sure that children and their families access any additional specialist support as needed. Parents and pupils agree that pupils are well cared for and safe, including when they are online.

Inspection findings

- In order to check that the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. My first line of enquiry was to establish how well pupils achieve in mathematics. The attainment of the pupils across the school is at least in line with and regularly higher than that of other pupils nationally. However, in 2017, key stage 2 pupils' progress from their starting points was lower than that found nationally in mathematics. I wanted to determine how well leaders are ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress and how effectively pupils are taught mathematical skills.
- You and the subject leader for mathematics looked carefully at the reasons why progress was below the national average at end of key stage 2. You understand that some boys and disadvantaged pupils could have done better. The evidence you presented during the inspection showed that in 2017 the school had in place a range of strategies, some of which were not as effective as you would have wanted, because of factors external to school.
- Governors understand the quality of teaching and outcomes of mathematics across the school as a result of the information that the subject leader shares. They know the impact of the range of strategies that have been put in place to support mathematical understanding. For example, they confidently talked about the focus on mathematical fluency and the improvement in pupils' weekly speed tests. When we were in class, pupils told me that knowing these facts made mathematics easier and fun.
- We looked at pupils' books and found that these showed that a good range of mathematical skills are being taught. Pupils are given increasingly good opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills, particularly in key stage 2. As a result, current pupils are making good progress in mathematics.

- You have identified that pupils need to be more regularly given opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects so that they understand that maths has a real-world purpose.
- Secondly, I considered the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and how leaders are ensuring that these pupils make strong progress across subjects. This is because published assessment information for the last two years shows that these pupils did not achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- We found that you plan very carefully for disadvantaged pupils so that provision within classes helps pupils to learn effectively. As part of your pupil progress meeting, you ask each teacher to identify the specific needs for each pupil, the ways in which these have been addressed and the impact that this is having. Every pupil now has a pupil profile containing this information. As a result, teachers have a good knowledge of disadvantaged pupils' abilities and are able to target support effectively. Current school assessment information indicates that the difference between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils is diminishing within school.
- We saw evidence that pupils who are disadvantaged were making good progress across the curriculum. There are many strengths in the wider curriculum, but we agreed that there could be greater opportunity for pupils to develop subject-specific skills alongside English and mathematics skills. Leaders recognise that the focus on consistency across classes in subject-specific skills will improve the outcomes in all subjects further for these pupils. Skills are developing, and progress is improving, but it is too soon to see the full impact of this joint working between subjects and with the local high school.
- Governors understand the progress of the disadvantaged children and pupils within school. They have identified the need to receive documentation from you which includes more specific details of how the additional funds the school receives are spent, and of the specific impact that has made.
- My final line of enquiry focused on what leaders are doing to promote good attendance. Attendance has been a strength of the school; however, in 2017 attendance declined and the proportion of pupils that were persistently absent from school increased.
- The members of staff with responsibility for attendance are able to discuss the reasons why persistent absence rates increased last year. Absence is closely monitored and prompt action is taken to address any absence that appears unnecessary or if a pupil is regularly not attending school.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time.
- You have plans in place to improve attendance further. This has included a focus on rewarding good attendance alongside individualised support for families when needed, to encourage better attendance. This has started to reduce the large number of pupils in the previous year who had low attendance.
- As a result, the number of pupils who were persistently absent across the school is reducing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics, including for those who are disadvantaged, by ensuring that they applying their mathematical skills well in all subjects
- pupils have more opportunities to develop the specific skills needed in subjects other than English and mathematics
- they continue to improve the attendance of those who are persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Cassandra Williams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- At the start of the inspection, we discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning.
- Documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, governors' minutes and the school improvement plans, were evaluated.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. Discussions were held with the safeguarding leaders.
- Together, we observed pupils' learning in classes. We looked at samples of pupils' work in each class to evaluate the progress that pupils are making over time.
- I spoke informally with pupils during lessons regarding their learning. I also met with a group of pupils and observed breaktime.
- I met with the chair of governors and three other governors.
- The views of the 45 parents who responded to Parent View, the 19 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 123 pupils who completed the online pupil questionnaire were taken into account. I considered 44 parental comments from the free-text service available during the inspection.