

23 April 2018

Ms Deborah Fenn
Headteacher
St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hitchin
Benslow Lane
Hitchin
Hertfordshire
SG4 9RD

Dear Ms Fenn

Short inspection of St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hitchin

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

The school's leadership is much stronger now than at the time of the previous inspection. You and the school's governors have made improving leadership a high priority. This was an area for development from the previous inspection. The success of these efforts can be seen clearly in the much-improved leadership of individual subjects in the curriculum.

Pupils are given an interesting and stimulating educational diet, and this is helping to raise the school's very good standards even further. For example, on the day of the inspection, pupils throughout the school took part in a 'reptile day'. Pupils were fascinated by the interesting and unusual creatures that they saw. In the Reception class, we saw children writing enthusiastically about the snakes that they had been given the opportunity to touch.

You and the governors have also taken effective action to improve the progress pupils make in mathematics. This was the other area for development from the previous inspection. Published assessment information shows that pupils now make

very strong progress in mathematics. Indeed, in 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics was significantly above the national average. Pupils of all ages are given plentiful opportunities to investigate in mathematics lessons and to solve problems. Pupils told me that they regularly debate with each other about methods and findings. For example, during a Year 5 mathematics lesson, I overheard pupils using phrases such as 'Yes, but you're multiplying it ...' and 'But that's an equivalent fraction' as they worked out who was right and why. You have found that this approach is helping pupils to develop a deeper understanding of important mathematical concepts.

Pupils clearly love their school. Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children are happy at school. Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning and are keen to find out more about the topics that they learn about. The school provides pupils with a bright, welcoming and attractive learning environment. Pupils are given the resources they need, both to enhance their enjoyment of learning and to help them understand different concepts. Pupils' work and achievements are celebrated throughout the school.

Although my visit to the school took place at the usual point within the inspection cycle, I was aware of two qualifying complaints, made by the same complainant, prior to my arrival. While it is not within my remit to investigate individual complaints, it is my responsibility to check carefully whether such complaints give rise to wider concerns. Having considered all the available evidence in some detail, I am fully satisfied that these complaints are specific to those concerned and are not representative of more general concerns about the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school and the parents who responded to Parent View agreed with this. Pupils say that they can talk to the adults in school if they are worried about anything and they know that they will be listened to. The good relationships between staff and pupils are evident throughout the school. This helps to keep pupils safe. Pupils are more likely to raise any concerns they might have because they have faith that staff will listen to them, and take action to help them.

You have a very good understanding of your role as the school's designated safeguarding lead. Child protection records are kept well and show that you take prompt action when necessary. You have ensured that staff are vigilant to any signs of neglect or abuse, and that they report these to you or your deputy promptly. You check regularly on the health and well-being of pupils that you know to be vulnerable. This helps you to be certain that all pupils are safe and well and to take further action when you need to.

Inspection findings

- I followed a number of lines of enquiry in order to check whether the school remains good. First, I checked whether provision for pupils who have special

educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is led and managed well. I looked particularly at how well leaders and governors ensure that statutory responsibilities are met in this area. I chose this area in order to assess whether the issues raised by the qualifying complaints give rise to wider concerns.

- St Andrew's is a very caring and inclusive school. You and your staff value all pupils. You do what is necessary to ensure that pupils are able to join, attend and be successful at the school. You ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate pupils' disabilities. In some cases, you and your staff have gone to very considerable efforts to ensure that pupils' needs are met.
- You and the inclusion coordinator, who has responsibility for provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, lead this area of the school very well. The inclusion coordinator has recently completed the national award qualification and this has provided her with invaluable knowledge and expertise. The inclusion coordinator shows very good understanding of her role and, like you, she is determined that all pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities will do well at St Andrew's. In order to ensure the quality of provision, the inclusion coordinator monitors this regularly, both in classrooms and in sessions that take place outside the classrooms. As a result of this good leadership, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress overall, and some make rapid progress from their individual starting points.
- The second area that I looked at was how well the school communicates with parents and carers. I chose to look at this to evaluate whether good progress has been made towards addressing this area for improvement from the previous inspection. I also focused on this area to check whether there are any wider concerns arising from the qualifying complaints that I was mindful of during this inspection.
- Leaders and governors have done a great deal to improve communication. For example, in 2016, you carried out a survey to gather parents' views about the way the school communicates with them. You used the results of this survey to help you to decide how to improve the school's newsletter. The monthly newsletter is now used as a way of celebrating pupils' achievements and sharing what has been going on in the school, as well as providing practical information. I found no wider concerns about communication at St Andrew's.
- Finally, I looked at pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. Published assessment information shows clearly that standards in English and mathematics are high and have been for some time. In order to test whether there is any possibility that the school might be better than good, I checked whether there is evidence that pupils make substantial and sustained progress across the curriculum and in every year group.
- Since the previous inspection, you have ensured that the subject leadership has improved. Leaders are passionate about their subjects and focus well on ensuring that pupils learn through many interesting and stimulating activities and topics. For example, much has been done to improve provision in art and the results of this are clearly evident in pupils' excellent work, displayed with pride throughout the building.

- Pupils throughout the school have a 'learning journey' exercise book. They use their book to record work in English and in other subjects, such as history and geography. You have found that this has improved the standard of pupils' writing. The work in these books also shows that many pupils, in all year groups, are making substantial and sustained progress in a wide range of subjects. We agreed that subject leadership now needs to develop further so that all leaders have as much impact as possible on the subjects that they are responsible for, so that this outstanding progress is evident in every subject and in all year groups.
- Leaders have developed the school's approach to assessment well. The system for assessing English and mathematics is now very well established. Assessment of other subjects is also developing well. However, you are not yet able to track pupils' progress easily in individual subjects. This makes it more difficult to be certain of the effectiveness of teaching in each subject and, in turn, the impact that teaching is having on pupils' outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leadership is developed further so that leaders have maximum impact on raising outcomes in their subjects
- the tracking of progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is developed fully.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and other leaders. I met with the chair of governors and two other members of the governing body. I spoke with two representatives of the local authority on the telephone and spoke briefly with an occupational therapist. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils during the day. I took into account the following: 75 responses to Parent View; 69 free-text comments; 23 responses to the staff survey; and emails from two parents. I observed teaching and learning, jointly with you, in four classes. I looked at school documents, including the single central record and information about SEN and/or disabilities.