

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



25 May 2018

Ms Angela Fleming  
Headteacher  
Great Torrington Bluecoat Church of England Primary School  
Borough Road  
Torrington  
Devon  
EX38 7NU

Dear Ms Fleming

### **Short inspection of Great Torrington Bluecoat Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 2018 with Mark Lees, Ofsted Inspector, 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 April 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the governing body have set a clear direction for the school to ensure that it continues to prosper. You have successfully strengthened the capacity of your middle leaders since the last inspection in order to develop an engaging and exciting curriculum for pupils. Your focused and determined leadership sets the tone for the whole school community. You and other leaders have high aspirations for the pupils. As a result, pupils are motivated and well supported to make strong academic progress, often from low starting points.

You and your senior leadership team have strengthened the school's ability to meet the needs of an increasing number of pupils who have emotional and behavioural needs. One parent illustrated this by saying, 'With regards to supporting additional needs, this school goes above and beyond.' This has included admitting children to the school after their second birthday in order to support their learning further from a very early age. The three-year-olds in the nursery unit benefit from very strong teaching and a sensitive and carefully planned transition into the Reception classes. The wide range of intervention groups, for example the nurture group, effectively support vulnerable pupils as they move through the school. Inclusion is a strength of the school.

Parents are appreciative of the way you are accessible to them in the morning when they bring their children into school. They find this a helpful way of sharing concerns as they arise and resolving them immediately. Parents also value sharing

their child's successes as they enthusiastically involve themselves in working alongside them in the classroom on an introductory task at the start of the day. Pupils say that they are happy and they love coming to school. One parent confirmed this by saying, 'My son runs to school every day with happiness and excitement.'

Pupils across the school behave very well, working hard to develop their skills. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they make strong progress. Nevertheless, you recognise that the stronger support you provide for some pupils has not been in place long enough to develop their skills fully, particularly in writing. This is so for the most able and others who have not made sufficient progress in the past.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to raise expectations about the neatness and accuracy of pupils' handwriting, and the presentation and quality of their work. Leaders have tackled this area successfully. Pupils' presentation is much improved. Handwriting has been a focus for the school. Letters are now correctly formed in the early years and then neatly written in cursive script as pupils move through the school. Spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are mostly addressed in writing tasks and work is generally of a high standard.

The previous inspection also identified the need to provide all pupils, including the most able, with sufficient challenge so they always make the best progress possible. Actions to improve this aspect of the school's work have been taking place and have been particularly effective for those pupils who have additional education needs. However, the work provided for the most able pupils does not challenge them effectively. As a result, these pupils do not consistently make the best progress possible and this is particularly evident in their writing.

You and other leaders know that there are some key areas that must remain a further focus for improvement. Leaders need to ensure consistency in expectations of the quality of pupils' work in key stage 1. Although many pupils make good progress, the level of challenge in different classes across the key stage varies considerably. This means that not enough pupils are achieving work of the quantity and quality of which they are capable, especially in writing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The culture of safeguarding pupils is very strong. You and your staff are tenacious and know what to do to keep pupils safe. You are diligent and take timely actions to respond to pupils' needs. The section on safeguarding on the website is clear and easily accessible for parents and carers. This includes a strong statement on the importance of online safety. You and the designated safeguarding leader have a firm understanding of procedures and responsibilities. Consequently, you have ensured that all staff have received the appropriate child protection training. Leaders and administrative staff ensure that checks undertaken on staff recruitment and visitors are stringent and secure. Your staff work very effectively with parents and external agencies to monitor and support any vulnerable pupils. You, your designated safeguarding leader and governors ensure that all safeguarding

arrangements are robust, effective and fit for purpose.

Pupils feel safe and their parents strongly agree that their children enjoy school and are well cared for. Pupils' conduct and support for each other play a significant part in their feeling of safety when in school. In informal conversations with pupils, they were happy and communicative. Staff know the pupils very well and are alert to any minor concerns or incidents which may occur. These are followed up quickly so they do not escalate. Attendance, as well as persistent absence, is broadly in line with the national average. You follow up any absences or late attendance rigorously.

## **Inspection findings**

- My first key line of enquiry focused on how the quality of teaching, learning and assessment supports pupils to make good progress. Children in the Reception class make strong and rapid progress, some from very low starting points. This is as a result of very good teaching and a wide range of meaningful learning experiences across a broad curriculum. Teachers and other adults take action very early to support the development of children's speech and language. They support parents to extend children's vocabulary to address speech inaccuracies at home as well as at school. Additional provision, such as the 'Nest' for two-year-olds and the Nursery for three-year-olds, make a strong contribution to the progress that children make.
- Children join key stage 1 with skills that are just below national averages. Teachers' expectations of the quality and the quantity of pupils' work is not yet uniformly high enough as they move through the key stage. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment is inconsistent. Teachers and teaching assistants do not always challenge pupils to complete work to the very best of their abilities, particularly in writing.
- Teaching in key stage 2 is consistently good. The progress of lower-attaining groups of pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly strong. This is as a result of a well-developed curriculum and small-group work. All pupils are particularly motivated by the 'learning in depth' projects, where they plan and develop their own learning projects. Examples of some pupils' ideas to promote learning are 'hands, feet, hooves and paws' and 'spiders', which excite and encourage them to develop skills across a wider curriculum.
- My second key line of enquiry evaluated how leaders challenged pupils, particularly the most able, to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable. This is because in the 2017 key stage 1 and 2 tests, pupils did not attain the higher standards that were expected nationally. You and your leadership team acknowledge that there is room for more improvement in this aspect of learning. In lessons, the most able pupils are making adequate progress, although the level of challenge is sometimes low. Pupils agreed that they would like their work to be harder and more challenging. This is not the case for all year groups and assessment shows that a larger number of current pupils are attaining at higher standards in reading and mathematics. Pupils are confident mathematicians, particularly in key stage 2, where the mastery of mathematics is

well developed. However, there is still some way to go before attainment at a higher standard is in line with national expectations.

- My third key line of enquiry explored how well leaders ensure that the teaching of phonics, spelling and reading leads to work that is always of a high quality. Work is generally well presented and handwriting is neat, well formed and mostly cursive from Year 2 upwards. Spelling in both key stages 1 and 2 is accurate or phonetically plausible. This is the result of having robust teaching programmes for phonics in key stage 1 and for grammar in key stage 2.
- Pupils read confidently with fluency and accuracy. They speak enthusiastically about their books and obviously enjoy reading. The school librarian has introduced a range of clubs and initiatives to increase pupils' interest in reading for pleasure. For example, a mobile library operates in the playground each lunchtime so pupils can choose to read quietly if they want to. These additional reading opportunities have increased pupils' reading skills as well as promoting a greater interest in reading. Pupils have a good understanding of the meaning of the text and its vocabulary as well as reading words by breaking down sounds and letters. They use dictionaries and glossaries as a matter of course to support their understanding of the text. Leaders have successfully engaged in external research to secure the improvement in reading attainment in key stage 1 as well as raising reading standards across the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have uniformly high expectations of what pupils can achieve in their writing in key stage 1, so that all pupils meet or exceed the standards expected for their age
- learning planned for pupils, particularly in writing, provides greater challenge, especially for the most able, so more of them can achieve the higher standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Jane  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We agreed the timetable and activities at the start of the inspection. We visited all classes with you and your senior leaders to observe teaching and learning. We reviewed pupils' books to consider the standards of work and the progress that pupils are making. We talked to pupils at different times of the day as well as in a group and listened to some pupils read.

We held meetings with you throughout the day. We also met with members of staff and governors to discuss the school's work. We reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including policies, safeguarding documents, assessment information and your school improvement plan and self-evaluation document.

We talked to parents and took into account the 68 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the 23 free-text responses received for the inspection.