

23 May 2018

Mrs Sonia Innes
Headteacher
Little Plumstead Church of England Primary School
Old Hall Road
Little Plumstead
Norwich
Norfolk
NR13 5EW

Dear Mrs Innes

Short inspection of Little Plumstead Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Little Plumstead is a friendly and welcoming school which is committed to developing the whole child academically, socially and emotionally. In this school, all pupils are valued and welcomed.

You provide highly effective leadership for the school and are very well supported by a strong, skilled team of teaching and non-teaching staff. Staff are highly committed to the school and to ensuring that all pupils do well. One parent's response to Ofsted's online questionnaire was typical of others, referring to 'the completely dedicated people aiming at the highest quality development of all children, regardless of their background, home, home support and ability'. Staff take their lead from you and so, like you, are reflective and questioning of their practice. Together, you draw on good practice within the school and from elsewhere to continually improve the quality of teaching and learning. Staff value your support and every member of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire said that they feel appreciated and respected, and enjoy working at the school. You and your team have maintained the good level of teaching and tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, which were to accelerate progress in reading and mathematics. We agreed that these would be the areas I would look at in detail during the inspection and which are reported on below.

Governors are skilled and knowledgeable. They provide well-balanced support and challenge for you and other leaders. They visit regularly and these visits are sharply focused on areas from the school's development plan or rapid improvement plans.

Together, you and the governing body are forward-thinking. For example, you are planning carefully for the future expansion of the school and considering how to maintain strong and effective links with local schools in a changing educational landscape.

Teaching is good because teachers carefully plan work according to pupils' needs, using assessment, including during lessons, to identify gaps in pupils' learning, which are swiftly addressed. For example, during the inspection, I saw in Year 4 one pupil's own work being used with the class to discuss what aspects of the writing worked best and how it could be further improved. Teachers ask questions which make pupils think hard. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 5 were explaining about subordinate clauses and how these can be used in writing to different effect.

Relationships between pupils and staff are very strong and staff know all pupils well. Pupils told me that adults help them with their work and if they are worried or upset. Pupils are rightly proud of the school and this is reflected in the attendance rates, which are higher than those nationally. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous, listening well to their teachers and to each other. You and your team ensure that pupils' emotional needs are well met, developing attributes such as resilience. One pupil told me: 'In the hardest situations, we stay as positive as we can.' Another said: 'We build each other up.' This reflects the highly positive ethos across the school.

Pupils benefit from an interesting curriculum which provides a good level of challenge. For example, in science pupils enjoy carrying out a wide range of experiments and investigations, such as testing the brightness of bulbs and exploring the functions of the heart and blood. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the scientific concepts which these show and they do so well. Good links are made between areas of learning, such as pupils' writing and geography and history, and these links enhance pupils' progress. The outdoor area is used well to support learning. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs after school, such as cricket, choir and musical theatre. These enhance the curriculum and help develop pupils' skills, including their social skills.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. The vast majority who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, have confidence in leaders and feel that their concerns are dealt with effectively. Parents particularly value the warm, supportive nature of the school. Typical of the comments received was this from one parent: 'Staff are beyond just teaching the curriculum and are really shaping students to become caring members of society.' And another commented: 'This is a fantastic, caring and inspiring community school. It is well led and encourages all pupils to flourish and excel as well as develop positive behaviours towards each other.'

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding exists throughout the school. Recruitment checks on staff are thorough and recorded in line with statutory requirements. Staff training is kept up to date and is effective. The concern forms that staff complete show that they know what to look for that may indicate a pupil is at risk. Pupils' files are well maintained and demonstrate that you and designated leaders are tenacious in following up concerns with

other agencies when necessary.

Pupils know about how to keep themselves safe, including when online, because they are taught about safety as part of computing lessons and e-safety weeks. You have provided information for parents about online safety in newsletters. However, you acknowledge that you could do more to ensure that all parents understand the risks when online and steps they can take to keep their children safe.

Pupils that I spoke to during the inspection said that the school is a safe place and that there is always someone to speak to or to help them if they have concerns. Pupils know what bullying is and what it is not, and said that bullying is extremely rare at the school. Almost every parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children feel safe at school and that the school deals effectively with bullying.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the lines of enquiry that I would follow during the course of the inspection. The first of these was how effectively reading is taught so that all pupils make good progress. We agreed I would look in particular at the progress boys are making in reading, and at the progress of those pupils who did not reach the expected standard in the phonics check at the end of Year 1.
- I found that reading has a high profile in the school, with lots of systems and events to encourage pupils to read often and widely. There is a very attractive library which is well used by pupils and contains a good range of reading materials. Pupils told me that there were lots of good books available for them. You invite authors in to speak to pupils and to work with them. Pupils took part in the 'hundred million minutes' reading challenge and are introduced to challenging texts through class novels, which some pupils then choose to take home to reread. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about reading.
- Leadership of English is effective and leaders demonstrated a very clear knowledge of the strengths and areas for improvement in reading. For example, you and your team had already identified that the progress of some pupils, often boys, in reading had not been as strong as it should be. You have put in place specific support for pupils who need it and leaders were able to show me that this support is proving effective in accelerating pupils' progress. For example, I saw that the reading ages of some pupils in Year 2 have increased by more than a year within a space of three months due to the effective support provided.
- Leaders talked to me about how phonics is taught. We looked at the progress of those pupils who did not reach the expected standard by the end of Year 1 and I saw that most reach the standard by the end of Year 2 and go on to make good progress in key stage 2.
- Together, we looked at the school's assessment records for reading. These showed that, particularly in key stage 2, pupils are making good progress. However, the progress of some pupils in Years 1 and 2 in reading is not as strong. We agreed that this is because in key stage 1 the teaching of reading is not always as regular or as sharply focused as it needs to be to ensure that all pupils make good progress from

their starting points.

- The second line of enquiry that we agreed I would look at was how well pupils are developing their mathematical skills, in particular their reasoning and problem-solving, and applying these to solve challenging problems. This was because, in 2016, pupils at the end of Year 6 achieved less well than pupils nationally. In 2017, mathematics outcomes were above national averages and I wanted to see if this improvement was being sustained.
- You explained that in 2016 there were a number of pupils in the Year 6 group who had specific difficulties. As part of your analysis of outcomes, you found that some pupils took too long to complete calculations because they lacked sufficient fluency in calculation. Consequently, you have introduced regular, rapid practice of basic skills. This is proving effective. Pupils' books show increasing competence and confidence in number work.
- Leadership of mathematics is very effective because leaders have a very clear knowledge of the subject and promote effective teaching strategies. Regular 'rapid action plans' are drawn up to address specific areas of mathematics identified as needing improvement. These plans are evaluated carefully and further action is planned. For example, leaders led a project developing pupils' times tables knowledge, which was highly effective.
- Leaders have ensured that reasoning and problem-solving are taught regularly. For example, the introduction of 'maths talk' has developed pupils' abilities to explain their mathematical thinking. Pupils' books showed that, in most classes, teachers provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to problems and puzzles.
- Pupils benefit from the opportunity to select the appropriate level of challenge for themselves. Pupils told me that teachers are vigilant in ensuring that pupils select the challenge that will extend their learning.
- Leaders check that numeracy skills are promoted across the curriculum. For example, leaders identified ways to develop pupils' skills in handling data and statistics through science and geography activities.
- Pupils' books and the school's assessment information show that, in most classes, pupils are making good progress in mathematics. However, some pupils are not making enough progress between the end of the Reception Year and the end of Year 1. You and your team have put in place a range of interventions to address this and are looking closely at curriculum provision in both year groups. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of this on pupils' progress.
- When looking at progress in mathematics and reading, we also looked together at records of your regular meetings with staff to discuss pupils' progress. It was evident that you and your team closely analyse the progress of each pupil, and discuss any additional support that is needed. However, we agreed that you and other leaders do not always use your assessment information to ask sufficiently probing questions about the quality of teaching and learning in specific classes or subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of reading in Years 1 and 2 is more regular and better matched to pupils' individual needs
- strategies to improve pupils' progress in mathematics between the end of the Reception Year and the end of Year 1 are embedded so that all pupils make good progress
- leaders ensure that meetings to discuss pupils' progress use assessment information more effectively to ask robust questions about the quality of teaching and learning in individual classes and subjects where needed.

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

Yours sincerely

Maria Curry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the leadership team, with the leaders for mathematics and English, and with seven governors. I met with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I visited all classes and evaluated pupils' work. I took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.