

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 June 2018

Mr Duncan Nelmes
Executive Headteacher
Littleham Church of England Primary School
Littledown Close
Littleham
Exmouth
Devon
EX8 2QY

Dear Mr Duncan Nelmes

Short inspection of Littleham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Littleham is a growing school. Pupil numbers have doubled since you joined the school in 2010. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to another parent. Communication with parents is good. Staff are approachable and parents value this.

In an effort to give pupils an even better start to school, the governing body decided to lower the admission age to include two-year olds in September 2015. This has been a successful initiative. More children are getting a good start to their education earlier. The early years unit is an exciting place to be. The purposeful environment ignites children's curiosity. Their language blossoms because of the good teaching they receive. This good start exemplifies your school's vision: 'Firm foundations for the future'.

You and the head of learning demonstrate determined leadership, which has seen the school through a time of significant expansion successfully. You have inducted new staff well. Staff share your passion to make a difference and share a strong feeling of teamwork. You have developed a team of middle leaders who are united in their goals to improve pupils' progress and achievement further.

You have an accurate view of your school. You have detailed development plans, which focus on the most necessary aspects for improvement. You are implementing these plans with determination. However, in some cases, it is too early to see the impact of changes you are making on pupils' attainment.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics to raise pupils' attainment. Pupils are now more involved in the subject, and teachers make them justify their thinking and reasoning. As a result, pupils are deepening their understanding of mathematics. However, although improving, pupils' attainment in key stage 1 has remained in the bottom 20% of schools nationally for the last two. On occasions, teaching does not meet pupils' needs precisely enough. Therefore, this continues to be an area for development.

You provide governors with a detailed and accurate view of the school's work. Governors are conscientious and make frequent checks to ensure that your team is on track to carry out the actions for improvement you have identified. However, leaders' actions are not closely enough linked to improving pupils' progress and achievement. As a result, governors are not able to assure themselves that school improvement priorities are making the necessary difference swiftly enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have created a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils' well-being is a priority. Staff understand and follow the school's procedures to keep pupils safe. They are vigilant in reporting any concerns. You keep meticulous records, work closely with external agencies and are quick to challenge agencies where necessary. Your uncompromising drive ensures that pupils and their families receive the support they need. Although compliant with government guidelines, some recording of staff vetting and recruitment is not well organised, despite checking by governors and others.

Staff know pupils well and are quick to help them overcome personal difficulties. Pupils are well supported because the school provides high-quality pastoral care. Pupils said that they feel safe and they know how to keep themselves safe. A small number of parents who responded to Parent View expressed concerns that the school does not always deal with bullying effectively. However, pupils told the inspector that bullying rarely happens and that, when it does, teachers deal with incidents well. Pupils said that Littleham is a 'telling school'. As such, they express confidence in all staff to deal with any worries. In addition, the school's curriculum helps pupils develop a good understanding of being safe and keeping a healthy body and mind.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry explored the effectiveness of the teaching of reading and phonics. This is because pupils' attainment in reading remains below average, despite often higher proportions of pupils meeting the standard expected of them in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. Effective teaching develops a

love of reading, and children's strong phonic knowledge helps them to read and spell with accuracy appropriate to their age.

- You recognise that elsewhere in the school pupils' progress and achievement in reading have not been good enough. You have made this academic year the 'year of reading'. Pupils in key stage 2 enthuse about the new reading system you have implemented. Their interest in books and their stamina for reading have increased. Your assessments are accurate and show that pupils' comprehension skills are improving. In Year 6, the progress and achievement of current pupils are much more positive than in previous years. Over a third of pupils are making rapid progress. However, such progress is not replicated in other year groups. Although progress is improving, too few pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age in reading.
- In particular, the progress of pupils across key stage 1 is often slow. Those who leave the early years with skills below those expected for their age do not catch up. Other children who leave early years having acquired the skills needed for their age do not sustain good progress. On occasions, teachers do not match books sufficiently to pupils' reading ability. You have purchased additional resources and implemented staff training to remedy this. Current Year 2 pupils are catching up. However, your actions have yet to make a big enough difference to pupils' reading attainment and progress across key stage 1.
- We also explored why it is that pupils' achievement in writing is stronger than in reading. Pupils' writing books show that they apply their phonics well to spell accurately. Teachers match work well to pupils' needs in writing. The investment leaders have made in developing staff's subject knowledge in writing has paid off. Pupils enjoy writing and write often. Pupils, in Years 5 and 6 in particular, often make rapid progress. In 2017, pupils' progress in writing put the school in the top 20% of schools in the country. However, you recognise that not enough pupils leave key stage 1 writing with the skills and knowledge expected for their age.
- Another focus related to the progress of disadvantaged pupils. You monitor the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils carefully. You make sure that these pupils have equal access to clubs and activities and you are unwavering in your ambition to support pupils' social and emotional development. You do this well. More of these pupils are emotionally settled and are ready to learn because of the additional support in place for them.
- Too few disadvantaged pupils reach the standards expected for their age. As a result, they are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education. In response, you are currently revisiting the plans for those disadvantaged pupils who also have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Plans match pupils' needs but, on occasion, pupils' targets are too vague. When this is the case, pupils' progress slows.
- Finally, we focused on pupils' attendance and the school's exclusion information. You have been effective in reducing the amount of overall absence in the school. However, too many pupils are still persistently absent. There are promising signs of improvement more recently as a result of your work with other agencies.
- The behaviour of the majority of pupils in the school is good. However, in the past, the school's exclusion rates have been high. You have a great deal of

success in helping pupils to manage their behaviour. As a result, in the past, pupils from other schools who struggle to manage their behaviour have joined Littleham. Once pupils settle into Littleham, incidents diminish.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans for improvement are linked sufficiently to precise information on pupils' progress so that leaders and governors can gauge the effectiveness of actions and make swift changes where necessary to increase rates of pupils' progress, including for disadvantaged pupils
- teaching of mathematics is more precisely matched to pupils' needs
- ensure effective teaching of reading, including the right match of books for pupils, in key stage 1 so that pupils reach at least expected standards
- strengthen support for pupils who are disadvantaged and also have SEN and/or disabilities so that the help they receive is finely tuned to their needs.

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

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the head of learning to discuss the school's performance since the last inspection, as well as current performance and the school's improvement plan. The head of learning and I jointly visited lessons and looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks. I spoke with four members of the school's governing body. I also listened to pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 read. I also met with your mathematics and English leaders.

We discussed the school's approach to reporting safeguarding concerns and your engagement with external agencies. I considered safeguarding audits and subsequent actions. I spoke with a group of pupils from key stage 2 to ascertain their views of the school. I also took account of the 46 responses to Parent View, a letter from a parent and the five responses to the staff questionnaire.