

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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



20 July 2018

Mrs Caroline Tucker  
Headteacher  
Finmere Church of England Primary School  
Mere Road  
Finmere  
Buckingham  
Buckinghamshire  
MK18 4AR

Dear Mrs Tucker

### **Short inspection of Finmere Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 October 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2016, you have built a united, committed and hard-working staff team. Staff and governors wholeheartedly support you and appreciate your good leadership, effective communication skills and dedication. You make sure that everyone at Finmere is valued and that the school is inclusive and welcoming. The school's Christian values help to foster respect for each other and kindness. Parents and carers are full of praise for the care and support that their children receive. As one parent commented, 'The nurturing, caring, family atmosphere of the school is brilliant.'

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They are beautifully behaved, helpful and polite. Pupils approach their learning with positive attitudes and they are confident and keen to talk to visitors about their work. They said that their teachers support them well and make learning interesting. Pupils particularly enjoy belonging to a small village school and the opportunity to play and mix with pupils from different year groups. They also like taking part in whole-school events and activities such as their forthcoming production of 'The Wizard of Oz'.

During the school's previous inspection, inspectors recognised the school's many strengths. Inspectors also asked leaders to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently outstanding, and to increase pupils' rates of progress in mathematics, particularly for the most able pupils. Although the quality of teaching is not outstanding, it is good and continues to improve. Current pupils, including the most

able, are making good progress in mathematics.

Children in the early years continue to achieve well and get off to a good start to school. You have taken effective action to improve pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1. As a result, standards in 2018 have risen in reading and writing. The majority of pupils attain well in key stage 2. Greater challenge is helping more pupils to achieve the higher standards in reading and mathematics. However, not as many pupils attain the higher standards in writing. When we reviewed pupils' books, we agreed that sometimes the most able pupils are not challenged quite as well as they could be in their writing tasks.

You have continued to improve other aspects of the school. You have worked effectively with governors to improve the school's standing and profile in the community. As a result, the number of applications for school places in September 2018 has risen significantly. You have also ensured that pupils benefit from an interesting curriculum, and that they learn in a suitably broad range of subjects. Nevertheless, you acknowledge that the current curriculum plans do not set out precisely enough what knowledge and skills pupils will learn over time in each subject.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Finmere. You lead regular training for staff so that they are knowledgeable and confident about safeguarding. You carefully and systematically log and respond appropriately to any concerns about pupils' safety or welfare. Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They consider safeguarding arrangements at their regular meetings and carry out a thorough and detailed annual audit of all aspects of safeguarding.

You keep safeguarding high on the agenda and continually seek to strengthen arrangements. For example, you made improvements to the perimeter fence and entrance to make the school site more secure and safe. You also invite organisations such as ChildLine to lead assemblies to strengthen pupils' understanding about personal safety.

All pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they feel very safe at school and are well cared for by staff. Pupils said that bullying rarely happens and that staff respond quickly and promptly to any concerns. Pupils know how to keep safe online, and know that it is important to report any concerns immediately to an adult. Every parent who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their children are safe and are well looked after at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, we focused on some specific aspects of the school's work including: safeguarding; the school's work to improve phonics; how well the most able pupils are challenged, particularly in writing; and how well the curriculum is planned to enable pupils to achieve well and to prepare them for life in modern

Britain.

- You have made adjustments to teaching arrangements to strengthen pupils' learning in phonics and provided a higher ratio of teaching staff in the mornings. This helps teachers to keep a close and careful check on pupils' learning and target any gaps in their phonics knowledge.
- Although the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check declined this year, the very small cohorts of pupils do not make for meaningful comparisons. In addition, almost half of the cohort did not join the school until the beginning of Year 1. This means that some pupils did not benefit from phonics teaching at Finmere during their year in Reception.
- You and your staff are working in partnership with parents to support pupils' reading at home. Teachers are also giving even more opportunities to those pupils who find reading and phonics a challenge, to help them practise their skills in school. While current pupils are making good progress, some pupils' attainment in phonics is not as strong as you would like it to be. You are therefore wisely continuing to keep this aspect of the school's work under the spotlight.
- The most able pupils are suitably challenged in mathematics. Teachers encourage pupils to extend their learning by completing harder tasks. Typically, teachers set 'apprentice', 'qualified' and 'master' tasks so that there is extra challenge for the most able pupils.
- Teachers plan interesting writing tasks and many opportunities for pupils to write in a range of contexts. However, we agreed that sometimes the most able pupils are not challenged quite as well as they could be in their writing tasks. As a consequence, some of these pupils are not making such strong gains in their writing.
- You have implemented an interesting curriculum, which captures pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Visits to places of interest bring topics to life. For example, the visit to a Roman villa enables pupils to work like archaeologists and search for 'Roman remains'.
- Through the school's topic work, pupils learn in a suitably broad range of subjects. However, the school's curriculum plans do not set out in sufficient detail how pupils will develop their skills and knowledge as they progress through the school. This means that, sometimes, pupils are not building well enough on their previous learning in some subjects in the wider curriculum.
- Through religious education, pupils learn about Christianity and other world religions. Pupils reflect on the similarities and differences between different faiths such as a Christian baptism and the Hindu special naming ceremony. They learn about places of worship, festivals and special books that are unique to each religion. Pupils learn about life in other countries such as India and Africa and how life in the city can be very different from rural life in developing countries. These experiences help pupils to learn about life beyond their locality and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they refine the school's curriculum plans to include greater clarity about the skills and knowledge that pupils will develop in subjects other than English and mathematics
- the most able pupils are more consistently challenged in writing so that more attain the higher standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Together with you, I visited all classes to look at pupils' learning and talk to pupils about their work. I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and the school's safeguarding arrangements. We also met together with two teachers to discuss pupils' progress. I met with five governors, including the chair of governors. I had telephone discussions with the local authority representative and the school's diocesan link adviser. I spoke to pupils during our visits to class and met with a group of pupils from Years 2 to 5. I reviewed a range of safeguarding documents, including the school's pre-employment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. I also reviewed other school documents, including policies, minutes of meetings, the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I considered the views of parents through the 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as parents' written comments. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I took into account the responses from the 12 members of staff who completed the Ofsted staff survey and the 21 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.