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Mrs Karen Read  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Church of England Primary School  
Burkitt Road  
Woodbridge  
Suffolk  
IP12 4JJ

Dear Mrs Read

### **Short inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Woodbridge**

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2013.

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

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

Parents, carers, staff and pupils think very highly of the school and your leadership. You lead the school with passion and the desire to ensure that all pupils achieve the best they can. Since your appointment, you have engaged with the school community to share your vision of how to improve standards even further. You and your senior team have focused on improving teaching, using assessment information to plan opportunities to improve pupils' progress and broaden the range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. Your high expectations are shared by all. This ensures that all staff are clear about what they need to do to improve standards.

Pupils speak very highly of their school. They are courteous and behave very well in lessons and around the school. Their attitudes to learning and the ways that they work together in class show that they understand and can apply the school values of respect, perseverance, responsibility, wisdom and creativity. Pupils who responded to the questionnaire and those spoken with during the inspection agreed that they enjoy school. They recognise the strength of the school as a close community where everyone supports each other. Pupils like the different levels of challenge in lessons and are able to explain how these are helping them to deepen their understanding. They particularly like the range of extra-curricular sporting activities on offer and, more recently, the addition of art projects.

Expected levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics have been above national levels for all key stages in 2017. You have identified that while attainment was very good in 2017, the progress of some groups of pupils was not as rapid as you would have liked. You have focused on improving the progress of the most able pupils and increasing the proportion of those achieving the higher standards in mathematics across the school.

You have been highly successful in involving staff in the development of the school. This is reflected in the questionnaire they completed, where all who responded recognised that there had been improvements since the previous inspection. Staff all agreed that the school is well led and managed; they enjoy their work and are proud to be members of staff.

In February 2016, the school joined the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust. The trust's improvement partner works alongside you to evaluate accurately the effectiveness of the school and therefore make carefully thought-through decisions about the next steps in its development. Middle and senior leaders, as well as governors, have benefited from opportunities across other trust schools to engage in training and development work.

Governors effectively hold leaders to account. They do this well because they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors visit the school regularly and work with you to identify priorities for improvement and determine how you are going to monitor these throughout the year. Consequently, governors successfully carry out their strategic roles, ensuring that the school improves further.

Parents are supportive. Of those parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, all said that they would recommend the school to other parents and agreed that the school is well led and managed. A theme throughout all of the parental responses and feedback was that St Mary's is an effective school. One parent explained, 'St Mary's is a nurturing school, where children are happy and encouraged to develop academically, emotionally, physically and spiritually.' Another added, 'The school provides a secure environment and inspires children to want to learn.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

In your role as designated safeguarding lead, you work closely with your deputy to ensure that safeguarding systems and processes are fit for purpose. Your promotion of the school's mission and values has strengthened the ways people care for one another, and as a result there is a positive safeguarding culture in the school. Staff recognise their responsibilities through regular training, as well as the support you and your deputy give them to ensure that pupils' well-being is at the heart of their work.

You have clear systems that support protecting children and safeguarding them from harm. You use external agencies effectively when needed to follow up referrals and are tenacious in the ways these are carefully recorded and monitored. Staff

recruitment includes the appropriate vetting checks, and your school's single central record meets requirements.

Pupils feel safe, parents believe that their children are safe and staff say that they believe children are safe too. Pupils learn about aspects of safety and safeguarding through personal, social and health education, religious education and assemblies. Pupils are confident that they can share their feelings and thoughts with each other and their peers. One pupil explained, 'It is safe to tell at St Mary's.'

## **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry centred on how well the school has addressed the areas for improvement raised at the previous inspection. Leaders have focused on how assessment is being used by teachers to ensure that they meet the needs of their pupils. You have developed an approach to teaching throughout the curriculum that gives pupils more opportunities to delve more deeply into topics. This has been achieved by introducing a system of tiered challenges to support teachers in meeting pupils' needs in lessons. There is a shared understanding of these expectations across the school.
- The quality of teaching and outcomes are monitored closely by middle and senior leaders. You have introduced a tracking system to help sharpen the focus of discussion in progress meetings, which are held to discuss the achievement of pupils and set targets for improvement.
- Middle leaders' roles have been developed and they now have clear responsibilities and accountabilities. They are involved in policy-making, monitoring and review. They have opportunities to work closely with senior leaders and routinely evaluate the impact of their work through subject and class progress meetings. They know the strengths and areas for development in their subjects well. They have worked with members of the trust improvement team and visited other schools as part of their own and the school's development.
- My second line of enquiry focused on what actions leaders are taking to challenge the most able to make stronger progress in key stage 2. You have recognised the need to monitor and evaluate most-able pupils' progress more closely. You have introduced systems to set targets and review progress more regularly. Middle and senior leaders meet with class teachers routinely to look at how well pupils are progressing, and this has helped focus discussions on evaluating the effectiveness of the provision and what the next steps should be to make further improvements.
- You have taken steps to challenge pupils to study topics in more depth. This approach was evident in some of the pupils' writing tasks, mathematics challenges and reading discussions that we observed. The impact was seen in some of the assessment tracking information that we reviewed, where you demonstrated that more pupils are reaching the higher standards this year than previously.
- Extra-curricular activities have been broadened to support all pupils with a range of challenges and opportunities to develop their personal skills. This has been recognised by parents as a positive development.

- My third line of enquiry focused on how the school is improving the achievement of pupils in mathematics and how it hopes to increase the numbers of pupils achieving the higher standards across the school.
- Developing pupils' mathematical thinking and skills further is at the heart of the school's work to raise standards further in mathematics. A mathematics mastery approach, where pupils are encouraged to explore and deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding, is at the core of the developments in mathematics. The school's specialist mathematics leader has focused staff training to support teachers in developing strategies to challenge and deepen pupils' understanding. This is being successfully implemented by teachers to improve the numbers of pupils achieving the higher standards.
- Leaders analysed previous pupil outcomes and determined that there was an overemphasis on memorising. They further identified that that this had an impact on how pupils used place value and number. This analysis has helped teachers to reflect on the strategies used in mathematical activities that would lead to a wider and deeper understanding of mathematical concepts and ideas.
- The introduction of a 'deeper rather than different' approach, and one that supports problem-solving and open-ended reasoning, is helping pupils achieve the higher standards. Evidence of this approach was seen in some of the classes we visited and in the books we scrutinised together.
- You recognise that while there is some evidence of improved outcomes in mathematics, the work needs to go further. Training and support for teachers, together with quality assurance of the teaching strategies, are planned.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue to:

- develop pupils' mathematical thinking and skills to increase pupils' progress, ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they can
- support and challenge the most able pupils, in all key stages, to achieve the higher standards in reading and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Russell Ayling  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke with you and your senior leadership team, middle leaders, school governors and a representative from the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust. I spoke with two groups of pupils as well as others in lessons and around the school. I talked with parents before and after school and staff throughout the day.

I visited lessons with you and your deputy, where we observed pupils' learning, and we also conducted some learning walks around the site. We looked at pupils' books in lessons across a range of ages and abilities. We scrutinised pupils' work with subject and senior leaders and looked at the school's assessment information.

I reviewed a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation and development plans, current progress information, pupil premium and sports premium reports, the child protection policy and current attendance information. We talked about safeguarding procedures and referrals, how these were recorded and also scrutinised the school's single central record. I also looked at the information available on the school's and St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust's websites.

I took account of 49 responses to the Parent View online survey and 47 free-text comments. I reviewed the nine responses to the staff questionnaire and the 31 responses from pupils who completed their questionnaire.