

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 October 2018

Mrs Cortina Newton
Headteacher
St Denys Church of England Infant School, Ibstock
Laud Close
Ibstock
Leicestershire
LE67 6NL

Dear Mrs Newton

Short inspection of St Denys Church of England Infant School, Ibstock

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 the school was judged to be good in November 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.**

This is a happy and a caring school. You ensure that the school's values are not just written 'above the school door' but are made meaningful in the life of the school. You have successfully created a nurturing environment for staff and pupils alike. Staff feel well valued and motivated, and have embraced your determination to ensure that they really get to know 'the whole child'.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They particularly enjoy the themed topics and special curriculum days, such as the Year 2 Pirates' Day, which took place during the inspection. Leaders ensure that such experiences are part of a rich and varied curriculum, which by and large successfully builds on what pupils are able to do to extend their learning. For example, pupils enjoy reading and read regularly. Pupils loved talking about their favourite author, Julia Donaldson.

Pupils feel safe and the vast majority behave well both in lessons and during playtimes. They are courteous to adults and keen to talk about their work. They treat one another with respect, saying, 'It doesn't matter if you look different. You can still be friends'.

Nearly all parents and carers are very happy with the school. For example, they say that homework is well organised and helps their children to learn. Parents of pupils

who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities speak in very positive terms about the effectiveness of the extra support that their children receive. The provision for these pupils is well organised, and their progress is carefully checked. As a result, they make good progress, albeit sometimes with small steps.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the teaching of mathematics and the quality of teaching by giving pupils clear guidance so they know how to improve. You were also asked to further strengthen the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that school leaders are given the time and training to carry out their roles effectively.

You have successfully adapted the teaching of mathematics to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to develop their skills in reasoning and problem solving and to increase their mathematical fluency. This consistent approach in how mathematics is taught has led to pupils making better progress in mathematics than previously. The proportion who attain the expected standard is now in line with the national average. School leaders do now check on teaching and learning in lessons. However, this is not yet having sufficient impact to ensure that the quality of teaching is of a consistently high standard across the school.

School leaders have correctly identified the most important areas to bring about further improvement. However, the plans to bring about these improvements are not sharp enough and have not brought about the rapid improvement necessary to some aspects of the school's work. The plans are not always clear about what success will look like. This means that you and other leaders are not always certain about the impact of your improvement plans, and governors cannot hold you closely to account for their effectiveness. Currently, this is slowing the rate of improvement that the school is making.

School leaders, especially you, the headteacher, are mindful of the well-being of staff and take care to ensure that their workload is not excessive, for example by adapting the marking policy. You and your leaders are successfully creating a nurturing environment for pupils and staff.

Governors are proud of the strong sense of community at the school. Since the previous inspection, the governing body has undergone significant change. Several experienced governors have retired or moved on. The newer members of the governing body are keen and want to help you to improve the school. However, they lack the necessary knowledge and skills to do so. For example, governors know that attainment in phonics has been too low, but they accept too readily that this is because of pupils' starting points. They have not done enough to challenge the information they receive or to hold school leaders to account for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have good individual knowledge of the most vulnerable pupils. They care about them and are ambitious for their success, as well as ensuring that they are kept safe. The procedures to check on staff's and volunteers' suitability to work

with children are well organised. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates and they know what action to take if they have any concerns about a child's safety or well-being. School leaders who are responsible for child protection are tenacious in following up concerns that they refer to the local authority.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school and they are taught how to stay safe and be healthy. The very rare incidents of bullying or racism are carefully logged and monitored. Pupils feel confident to speak to staff if they have any concerns or worries. However, school leaders and governors do not check carefully enough that policies are always properly implemented or that the learning from staff training is secure. The school's policy for safeguarding does not fully meet the latest requirements. Nevertheless, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- School leaders have succeeded in bringing about some of the improvements that were identified as being necessary at the last inspection. There are more opportunities for problem solving in mathematics and, although results declined in 2018, most of the most able pupils have achieved the higher standard in this subject.
- School leaders have developed new approaches to marking and feedback and these are consistently applied by staff, which contributes to most pupils making good progress in their learning.
- The headteacher checks on the quality of teaching and provides teachers with guidance about how to improve. Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have yet to ensure that they have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment in the areas they lead.
- School leaders have not acted with enough urgency to tackle some important areas for improvement, and plans for school improvement are not sufficiently detailed. Governors do not do enough to check on the impact of the work of school leaders.
- Pupils who are supported by government funding do not reach the same standards in English and mathematics as other pupils, either at the school or nationally. They do make steady progress, which is tracked carefully by school leaders. However, support for these pupils is not always carefully planned and evaluated. This means that leaders do not always know which strategies have been successful in raising these pupils' achievement. Disadvantaged pupils do not all make the progress of which they are capable.
- Too few pupils reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 and this has been the case for the last four years. Teaching of phonics is not consistently strong and school leaders have not acted with enough urgency to tackle this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics is of a consistently high quality, so that the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard by the end of Year 1 is at least in line with the national average
- school improvement plans are more sharply focused to secure more rapid improvement in those areas leaders have identified as most pressing
- governors hold school leaders more closely to account by checking that the actions initiated by the improvement plans are having a positive impact
- governors regularly check on the effectiveness and impact of safeguarding policies and training.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Strauss
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other school leaders and members of the governing body. I spoke with parents at the start of the day. I spoke with pupils during lessons, and met with a group of Year 2 pupils and listened to two of them reading. I observed teaching and learning jointly with you throughout the school. During these visits, I looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. We were joined by the deputy headteacher to examine pupils' work in a sample of their books.

I spoke on the telephone with an education effectiveness partner from Leicestershire County Council.

I scrutinised a range of documents related to safeguarding, behaviour, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress, and leaders' plans for improvement. I assessed the impact on teaching and learning of leaders' actions taken since the last inspection, as well as other lines of enquiry. I considered the 52 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as the 25 responses to the staff questionnaire. I also considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.