

12 March 2018

Mr Jonathan Tye
Headteacher
Churchgate Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Harlow
Hobbs Cross Road
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Dear Mr Tye

Short inspection of Churchgate Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Harlow

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2019, 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Pupils, parents and staff are very proud of their 'warm and welcoming' school, where the 'children are at the heart of everything the school does'. You have an effective, caring staff team, who are committed to making the school one where all pupils are valued equally.

Parents are very positive about the school and appreciate the support, care and guidance that leaders and staff provide for their children. An overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school. This is confirmed in Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Typical comments include: 'Churchgate is a lovely, nurturing, community school' that helps 'children grow to become confident, happy individuals.' Parents and staff agree that the school is well led.

Pupils spoke highly of how they are cared for by all staff and they feel safe and well looked after. As a result, pupils feel happy and 'confident to take a risk' with their learning. Pupils are polite and well behaved due to their understanding of the school's values. Pupils develop kindness and consideration for those less fortunate, for example, by fundraising and sending the toys they no longer use to Africa. The school council has been instrumental in school improvement by introducing recycling bins around the school and ensuring that pupils eat healthy snacks at breaktime.

Following a recent restructure, governors use their range of skills and expertise to

good effect. They are highly committed, have high expectations and have a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors work effectively with leaders to focus on the school's priorities. This is resulting in sustained improvements and, consequently, standards are rising at Churchgate. Governors acknowledge that the school's website was not compliant prior to the inspection and agree that it should be updated regularly.

The previous inspection identified that pupils were not challenged enough in their work and they were not clear about what to do to get better. Leaders have successfully ensured that all staff consistently follow the school's feedback policy. As a result of the guidance pupils receive, their progress is strengthened. For example, the children in Reception understand their next steps in writing due to the visual prompts in their books.

You correctly evaluate that the teaching of phonics is now a strength of the school following some focused actions. Over recent years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic screening check has continued to rise and is now well above the national average.

You recognise that there are still areas that need to improve. For example, boys, across the school, are not making enough progress in reading and writing to reach greater depth. You know that disadvantaged pupils need more support to do better in key stage 1 and you are working to improve pupils' attendance.

Safeguarding is effective.

At Churchgate, there is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that safeguarding is a priority of the school and all arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undertake appropriate training. Staff receive regular, up-to-date safeguarding training. This ensures that staff know their responsibilities and are able to follow the school's procedures. The school's records are detailed and maintained well. They show leaders follow up concerns in a timely way and involve external agencies to provide appropriate advice and support.

The curriculum includes aspects of teaching pupils to keep themselves safe, such as using electricity safely and learning how to be safe on the road when on their bike. Staff promote e-safety well throughout the school, which ensures that pupils know how to stay safe online. Pupils are confident that they can share concerns they may have with a member of staff or use the worry box in the classroom. They know problems will be swiftly sorted out.

Inspection findings

- To confirm that the school remains good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about boys' outcomes in reading and writing. Historically, boys have achieved less well than girls in reading and writing at the end of each key stage. Fewer boys reach greater depth in reading and writing than girls in school and pupils nationally.

- Boys talk positively about reading and writing. They have begun to read more due to incentives, such as additional house points. Boys were able to discuss many different authors and enjoy choosing their own books to read. They also enjoy reading to the younger pupils in the school.
- Leaders have reviewed and adapted the curriculum to ensure that it includes themes that interest boys. Boys enjoy applying their writing skills in different subjects, such as writing a newspaper report at the time of the Great Fire of London and recording facts about planets following internet research. Teachers in early years have ensured that there are well-planned writing activities. For example, during the inspection, boys confidently applied their phonic skills independently when writing a scroll as a knight in the role-play area.
- Teachers provide boys with a variety of prompts to use to support their writing, such as word banks and information displayed on working walls. Leaders use assessment information to ensure that interventions and booster groups are well targeted. An example is the support for boys in Year 5 to be more creative in their writing. As a result of pertinent feedback and clear success criteria, boys said that they know what they need to include in their writing and can 'make it even better'. Where handwriting has been practised regularly, there is an improvement in boys' letter formation and presentation skills.
- Current school information shows that more boys are on track to achieve greater depth in reading and writing. However, this is not yet consistent for all year groups.
- My second line of enquiry was about how well disadvantaged pupils achieve in early years and key stage 1. While these numbers are very small, disadvantaged pupils in early years and key stage 1 have not performed as well as other pupils in school and nationally in recent years, particularly at greater depth.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the barriers to learning disadvantaged pupils face. Using this information, leaders plan support that is well suited to help these pupils to catch up quickly. You also address the emotional and social well-being of these pupils where necessary. For example, you provide therapeutic support through counselling and art therapy.
- Your careful tracking of the progress that each pupil makes and work in pupils' books shows that, currently, disadvantaged pupils in early years and key stage 1, are making strong progress.
- My third key line of enquiry was to evaluate how effectively leaders have improved attendance and reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions. Attendance has been below the national average in recent years with a high proportion of pupils being persistently absent. Additionally, fixed-term exclusions have been above the national average.
- Your rigorous monitoring procedures have enabled you to identify the issues which prevent some pupils from attending school regularly. Despite working with parents to ensure that they are aware of the importance of regular attendance, too often, weaker attendance is due to unauthorised absences and term-time holidays.
- 'Attendance matters' is a school priority. You have recently revised your

attendance policy to ensure that your high expectations for attending school are clear and your procedures when following up absences are consistent. Newsletters and the website also provide information to support families. You have enlisted the support of the educational welfare service to assist with unauthorised absences and those pupils who are persistently absent. Pupils enjoy the range of activities offered, including a variety of clubs and school trips to interesting places such as the Tower of London. They relish the celebration awards for good attendance as individuals or as a class. Current school information shows an improvement in attendance, although persistent absence is slightly higher compared to this time last year.

- Due to a consistent approach to behaviour management and well-planned support for the very small number of pupils identified with challenging behaviour, the number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased considerably. There have been no exclusions this year to date.
- Finally, I evaluated how effectively leaders and governors carry out their statutory responsibilities, particularly the requirement to provide information on the school's website. At the start of the inspection, some information was missing from the school's website. All necessary changes were made during the inspection. My meeting with governors confirmed that they know the school well and understand their legal responsibilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more boys achieve greater depth in reading and writing
- a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils in early years and key stage 1 achieve greater depth
- they continue to work with the minority of parents whose children have too many absences
- the school's website is updated regularly to ensure that it meets statutory requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Welch
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss progress since the previous inspection and to agree the key lines of enquiry. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the

governing body, the most able boys in Year 5 and 6 and pupils who belong to the school council. I spoke to the English leader, the leader with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils and a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your plans for improvement, minutes of governing body meetings and assessment information. I examined the school's safeguarding procedures, child protection documentation and procedures and information about pupils' behaviour and attendance. We visited classrooms and looked at books in all classes. I also looked at 29 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 20 staff survey returns.