

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 March 2019

Mr Christopher Brown
Headteacher
Ninfield Church of England Primary School
Church Lane
Ninfield
Battle
East Sussex
TN33 9JW

Dear Mr Brown

Short inspection of Ninfield Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Ninfield is a very happy place for pupils to learn and for staff to work. Leaders have improved many aspects of the school since the last inspection. Their determination to provide the best for every pupil is palpable. Parents are unanimous in their view that their children are well taught. One comment, typical of the views of many parents was, 'The level of commitment shown by the teachers to the pupils and their learning is amazing. They get the best out of the children and are always ready to try new ideas to inspire the children.'

Leaders have the best interests of pupils and staff at the heart of their school improvement journey. All staff say that leaders are considerate of staff well-being and workload when bringing about changes to policy and practice in the school. Pupils are incredibly proud of their school and the important role that they play in making it a great place to learn. Pupil science ambassadors promote learning across the school, mental-health and well-being champions are excited about the plans for their work this year and the pupil council has clear spending plans for the playground improvements.

Since the last inspection, standards have risen. For the last four years, pupils at Ninfield have made significantly better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils nationally. As a result, pupils' attainment is well above average, and they are more than ready for the next stage of their education.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to raise standards in phonics and ensure that the most able pupils were achieving well. You have done this. Almost all pupils meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. The most able pupils have, and continue to make, very good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

In March 2015, the early years was evaluated as outstanding. Children continue to get off to a flying start at Ninfield. As a result, they are exceptionally well prepared for Year 1. Leaders and staff have been working hard to ensure that the key stage 1 curriculum is as good as it can be to meet the needs of the children who have had a very strong start to their education. Some of the changes that leaders made last year did not work as they hoped. Leaders are highly reflective and ambitious. As a result, changes were made again this year. Adaptations to how English and mathematics are taught have had a hugely positive impact across the school. Leaders are embedding the modifications that they have made in Year 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They have created a culture where 'expect the unexpected' dominates staff thinking regarding pupils' well-being. Staff have been well trained to observe and listen to pupils carefully. As a result, adults make timely and appropriate records of all concerns about pupils' well-being. The designated safeguarding leads act swiftly when they receive any referrals from staff. Leaders work well with other professionals to help keep pupils safe.

Pupils feel safe in school. They talk knowledgeably about how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders ensure that pupils hear a range of important messages from a range of different sources. As a result, pupils recall key facts with ease. I was told in no uncertain terms about the time it would take someone to work out a weak password versus a very strong one. Staff and parents feel that pupils are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- Children in the early years make outstanding progress. Staff have high expectations of what children can do. Children are competent storytellers. They have been taught a wide range of interesting ways to start their delightful tales. A very well-resourced and exciting learning environment means that children are brimming with enthusiasm to create and tell stories. Staff have also ensured that children are exposed to many traditional stories and tales.
- The teaching of phonics has improved significantly since the last inspection, including in the early years. Detailed assessments of what children know or what

they need to practise ensure that teaching over time is tailored to exactly what children need next. Children's very strong phonic knowledge coupled with the ability to tell stories means that the standard of children's writing in the early years is above average.

- The teaching of mathematics has improved markedly since the last inspection. Current pupils, including the most able pupils, are making very good progress and standards are high. Staff, including teaching assistants, have had wide-ranging, training opportunities over time. Staff have strong subject knowledge. Pupils have very good opportunities to solve mathematical problems and skilled questioning by staff ensures that pupils can articulate their reasoning very well. The positive learning climate in classrooms means that pupils are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from them. Pupils who need slightly more time to articulate a verbal response to questions are given appropriate time and space by staff and pupils alike.
- The teaching of writing has improved significantly since the last inspection. Standards for current pupils are as high as they have been over time. Staff have high expectations of pupils' writing in all subjects and pupils rise to these. A rich and broad curriculum ensures that pupils have a very wide-ranging vocabulary to enhance their writing. Pupils who require additional support with their handwriting, spelling or punctuation also make very good progress. Recent developments in the teaching of writing in key stage 1 are now ensuring that pupils continue to make great progress from their early years starting points.
- The leadership of subjects in a small school can be a challenge. Not at Ninfield. Senior leaders ensure that subject leaders get the very best training and support to develop teaching and learning in their subjects. Leaders have strengthened the teaching of science since the last inspection. Subject leaders have increased staff subject knowledge and confidence to teach science. Over time, there has been a clear focus on developing pupils' abilities to think and work like a scientist. Leaders have significantly increased the amount of hands-on, practical experiments that pupils design, undertake and evaluate. Pupils relish the opportunity to take home their 'science bags' and share learning with family and friends. As a result, pupils have a strong recall of the key scientific knowledge and vocabulary that they have been taught. Learning is memorable at Ninfield.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent changes in the transition between the early years and Year 1 are embedded, so that pupils continue to make very strong progress

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. You accompanied me to all classes, and I spoke with staff. We evaluated a range of work in pupils' books and I spoke to pupils about their learning and life at Ninfield. I joined pupils for lunch. I spoke to an officer from the local authority. I scrutinised 35 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text comments; I spoke to parents at the beginning of the day and considered letters given to me. I reviewed 11 staff and 41 pupil survey returns. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.