

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 May 2019

Mrs Hannah Walters
Headteacher
Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Maidstone Road
St Mary's Platt
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN15 8JY

Dear Mrs Walters

Short inspection of Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 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 October 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Under your attentive leadership, the school continues to move in the right direction. Leaders and governors have a realistic, detailed and accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Together, you are rightly proud of areas where pupils flourish, such as in their personal development and writing. With similar self-awareness, leaders have ensured that the school's action plan identifies correct priorities for further improvement. Following your previously successful work, the quality of English and mathematics education is strong and securely established. The next big step you have correctly identified is to overhaul and further strengthen the curriculum in foundation subjects.

Pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in their very positive attitudes and above-average attendance. The school's personal values of care, learn and forgive are woven tightly through its work, illustrated by exceptionally positive relationships at all levels. Pupils behave well. They are confident and curious learners. They make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics to reach standards of attainment at the end of each key stage that are above the national average. Pupils embrace academic learning opportunities with similar enthusiasm as they do the enriching opportunities for art, sport and music. As one parent expressed it: 'My children come home every day excited and happy to tell me about school.' This

sentiment was typical of the views of many.

Teachers' strong subject knowledge, especially in English and mathematics, lends them confidence and credibility. They combine this knowledge with their honed craft of asking well-chosen questions to check and deepen pupils' understanding, and help pupils remember and recall important learning points. The effective partnerships between teachers and teaching assistants help ensure that the varied needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well met.

The school's work in response to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection has been thorough and effective. The problem-solving aspect of teaching and learning in mathematics is deeply embedded. The outdoor area in early years is now a rich and varied source of learning for Reception children. When I visited, children were busily engaged in their varied self-chosen activities. Adults were alert to opportunities to extend and reshape children's learning, helping to make sure that children remained purposefully and meaningfully engaged.

Leaders' efforts to improve relationships with parents have paid off. Most parents are overwhelmingly positive about what the school provides. When responding to Parent View, many wrote glowing comments to praise the things they most admire about the school. 'I am very happy with Platt Primary and the sense my child has of belonging to a family' was just one example, typical of many.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's systems and arrangements to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose. Leaders and staff know each pupil and their family well. They are vigilant to both low-level and potentially more serious concerns that may affect pupils' safety or well-being. When they identify such concerns, staff and leaders take prompt and appropriate action accordingly. The school's established processes work well because staff are very familiar with them and follow agreed procedures reliably. Leaders are diligent in their record-keeping, detailing any concerns, the action taken and what has happened as a result. Leaders work proactively with other professionals and agencies in the best interests of pupils. The single central record contains details of all the relevant checks of the suitability of adults. Pupils feel safe in school. Some, as 'e-safety ambassadors', take an active role among their peers in promoting awareness of keeping safe online.

Inspection findings

- Problem-solving is deeply embedded in the mathematics curriculum. Mathematics plans identify numerous opportunities for problem-solving, meaning these activities become a routine part of daily mathematics teaching and learning. Pupils are confident to think, explore and discuss their reasoning in mathematics, not fazed if there is not immediately a correct answer. Adults and pupils use mathematical vocabulary precisely when discussing their calculations and reasoning. Adults' own clear explanations and demonstrations in mathematics

provide high-quality role models for pupils to simulate. Teachers' expectations of pupils' thinking and explanations are high.

- The curriculum is interesting and varied. Pupils benefit from learning and experiences right across the full range of primary national curriculum subjects. Lessons, trips, visitors, theme weeks and other special activities provide pupils with a motivating diet of experiences across different subjects. These contribute with suitable breadth to pupils' overall development and readiness for the next stage of their education. However, the school's curriculum in foundation subjects does not define precisely enough the knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils should develop right across the school. In contrast to English and mathematics, teachers' expectations and the resulting quality of pupils' work in foundation subjects are not high enough. Leaders have correctly identified this discrepancy and begun work towards addressing it, but this is at an early stage.
- Phonics teaching is effective. Adults and pupils draw readily on technical vocabulary that demonstrates the security of their phonic knowledge. Routines and techniques to help pupils learn, remember and use phonics are well established. Pupils confidently use their phonic knowledge to read and spell increasingly accurately. Those who initially struggle to learn to read habitually persevere with phonics as their reliable first port of call when tackling unfamiliar words. Pupils at the early stages of learning to read have reading books that are mostly well matched to their phonic abilities. The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check have been consistently above national figures in recent years.
- The accumulative effect of the school's thorough and systematic English teaching, built and sustained over time, can be seen in the high standard of writing of older pupils. Older pupils, particularly the most able, combine technical accuracy with a wealth of other, often quite sophisticated, composition techniques to sustain highly effective extended pieces.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum defines clearly the sequence of knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils should develop in foundation subjects right across the school
- expectations, including of the quality of pupils' work, are suitably high across all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn

**Her Majesty's Inspector
Information about the inspection**

You accompanied me as I visited all classes to observe as lessons were taking place, look at pupils' work and talk to pupils about their learning. Your deputy also joined us for some of these observations. I held discussions with you, other leaders and staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. At lunchtime, I spoke informally with staff and pupils. There were 53 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 50 written comments. I took account of all these, alongside 10 confidential surveys returned by staff and 83 by pupils. Before visiting, I reviewed the school's website and a variety of information about the school's performance over time. On site, I scrutinised safeguarding arrangements and records.