

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 November 2017

Mrs Fiona Hawkins
Headteacher
St Barnabas' Church of England Aided Primary School
Hart Street
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX2 6BN

Dear Mrs Hawkins

Short inspection of St Barnabas' Church of England Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 2017, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are a dedicated headteacher and uncompromising in your ambition for the school to continually improve and achieve the best outcomes for every pupil. Parents commented on how well each child is known. One parent said, 'The headteacher knows every child very well and not just by name.' The school's detailed self-evaluation documentation and improvement plans identify clear priorities to ensure the next stage of the school's development. Your work to develop the skills of teachers and leaders is strong. As a result, the leadership of English, mathematics and assessment is particularly effective.

Governors know the school well and understand its strengths and weaknesses. Governors' regular, sharply focused visits enable them to check how well the school's improvement priorities are being addressed. This allows them to challenge and support leaders from a well-informed position.

Pupils feel valued as a result of their positive relationships with staff. Leaders have created an inclusive and caring environment where pupils recognise their cultural diversity and welcome new arrivals into the school's caring community. All pupils benefit from a rich curriculum which is carefully planned to reflect their needs and interests. Pupils speak highly of their experience of school. They know that teachers and teaching assistants listen to their views and will act on them should they have any concerns. By the time they leave, at the end of key stage 2, they are thoughtful, articulate and caring young people.

Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection successfully. Pupils' work and the school's tracking information show that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities currently in the school have made stronger progress in mathematics than was seen previously. This is because staff have been supported with training to ensure that learning is well planned and pupils' mathematical skills are developed systematically. Teachers and teaching assistants closely monitor the impact of the school's strategies to improve these pupils' mathematical understanding. Although there have been improvements, you are aware that there is still some variability in the levels of progress made by these groups across the school. Your school action plan rightly prioritises a continued focus on ensuring that staff support these groups to make stronger progress from their starting points in mathematics.

You have created a leadership team that shares your ambition to continuously develop teaching and learning across the school. You and your staff are aware of what the school does well and those areas that need to improve further. Senior leaders know that pupils' achievement in writing needs to improve. Pupils' writing in subjects other than English is limited because there are not enough opportunities for them to write at length and practise their skills. In addition, writing tasks are not consistently well-matched to pupils' abilities. These factors combine to limit the rate of progress some pupils make in their writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders and governors take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that the necessary checks are made on all staff prior to them taking up their appointments. You, as the designated safeguarding leader, ensure that your staff are well trained in identifying and reporting all concerns about the well-being of pupils. When a concern about a pupil is raised, you work with the family and other agencies to ensure appropriate and immediate follow-up.

Governors are trained appropriately in safer recruitment practices and closely monitor the work of the school to satisfy themselves that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. For example, a governor is always involved in staff selection and recruitment.

Pupils said that they feel safe at school and could explain why. They have a good awareness of when they may be at risk and know that the school is a safe place. For example, pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils are kind to each other and welcoming to new pupils joining the school. They said that there is no bullying at the school, but that they are confident in how to deal with it, should it ever happen.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry for this inspection was to look at how effective leaders have been in reducing pupils' absence and persistent absence. In particular, I investigated the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. In 2016, the persistent absence rates for these groups were high when compared to the national average. Leaders have made improving attendance a high priority over the last two years, resulting in improvements. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities now attend in line with national figures. While the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved, the attendance of this group is still below that of their peers. Staff monitor persistent absence carefully, keeping meticulous records that are scrutinised closely by leaders. As a result, staff know the reasons for a pupil's low attendance and identify difficulties promptly and accurately. Consequently, pupils who are not attending school as regularly as they should receive the right level and type of support. This has ensured that persistent absence, particularly for these two groups of pupils, has decreased. This more regular attendance is having a positive impact on the achievement of these pupils.
- To improve overall attendance, you and your team work sensitively with families and collaboratively with outside agencies. This ensures that staff adapt the support and challenge they provide to reflect the situation of each pupil. Although overall attendance did not improve last year, there are signs that it has improved recently. These improvements are due to the rigorous implementation of a broad and comprehensive plan. Pupils and parents are now fully aware of the high expectations for all pupils' attendance.
- The inspection's next line of enquiry focused on pupils' progress in writing. Pupils' workbooks show that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of writing across the school. Grammar is being taught regularly and effectively, with opportunities to apply skills when writing for a range of different purposes and in various styles. As a result, progress is strong. Pupils' writing shows accurate use of punctuation and correct spelling, as a result of effective teaching. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in a wide range of subjects to develop their skills further.
- The school's records tracking pupils' progress and evidence seen in pupils' work show that senior leaders and staff have worked hard and effectively to reverse the dip in writing results in 2016. Staff training has enabled a consistent approach to assessing pupils' writing and the development of pupils' writing skills. Consequently, across almost all year groups, pupils are making strong progress in extending and improving their writing in English lessons. In general, the quality of pupils' writing has risen to meet the higher standards seen in their reading and mathematical work. Despite this, there are limited opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills through extended pieces of written work.
- My third line of enquiry looked at what the school was doing to raise attainment in writing, especially for low-attaining and middle-attaining pupils. Leaders' careful tracking of pupils' attainment has successfully identified gaps in learning and information has been used well to improve teachers' planning. Pupils' work is now better matched to the needs of these groups of pupils. Leaders have used

the monitoring of teaching to accurately identify areas for specific improvement. This has increased teachers' awareness of what different groups of pupils should be achieving in their writing. Current pupils' attainment is rising rapidly because they are making good progress in writing. However, some teaching does not provide enough challenge for some groups of pupils. As a result, a minority of pupils do not make sufficient progress to reach the standards they are capable of.

- Visits to classrooms quickly demonstrated that a wide range of good teaching is securing the effective and sustained improvement of low-attaining and middle-attaining pupils' writing skills. My scrutiny of pupils' work across the school and evaluation of the school's achievement information showed clear improvements being made during this term and during the last academic year. Younger pupils use their phonics knowledge well to confidently read and write a wide range of complex words. Older low-attaining and middle-attaining pupils are becoming skilful writers. For example, when describing their recent trip to a museum, pupils correctly used their knowledge of writing, including expanded noun phrases (a noun and any words that modify it).
- My final line of enquiry was concerned with the effectiveness of the school's work to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well to typically make expected progress. Your monitoring of teaching has rightly focused on the extent to which staff are providing disadvantaged pupils with demanding work that challenges them and makes them think deeply in writing and mathematics lessons. You have made improvements by making sure that teachers and teaching assistants have appropriately high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. However, there are times when pupils do not learn quickly enough and their progress is not as strong as it could be. This is because pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length to make full use of their writing skills across different subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is rising. This is because of a sharp focus by all staff on pupils' current skills when planning and delivering lessons. You have made sure that teaching assistants have the knowledge and skills to ensure that learning is rapid in small-group sessions. Staff deliver a wide but carefully selected range of support programmes effectively. This is having a positive impact on the standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils, including those pupils who also have SEN and/or disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to increase their expectations of what all pupils can achieve and plan learning to an appropriate level of challenge in writing and mathematics
- overall attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils, continues to improve and is at least in line with the national average

- pupils have greater opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills and write at length in different subjects across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together with you, I observed learning across the whole school. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I met with senior leaders and the chair of the governing body. I held discussions with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Oxford. I spoke to pupils and examined work in their books. I considered 12 responses to the staff survey and 41 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as 41 free-text replies. I also held conversations with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. I evaluated a range of the school's documentation, including: information about pupils' achievement and attendance; the school improvement plan; evidence of leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning; and documents related to safeguarding.