

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



31 January 2017

Mrs Nicola Gough
Headteacher
Welton St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy
School Drive
Welton
Lincoln
LN2 3LA

Dear Mrs Gough

Short inspection of Welton St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 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 July 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 and your senior leaders are equally committed to the school's vision to provide a high-quality education for your pupils. You have high expectations for your pupils and are determined to ensure that they fulfil their true potential academically, socially and spiritually. You ensure that staff, in their teaching and in their pastoral care of pupils, model and develop the values that govern and guide your work. Teachers build in regular opportunities to teach these values explicitly. The strong ethos you have developed enables pupils to thrive and to feel safe.

You have an accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of your school and take effective action to address any weaknesses you identify. You want nothing but the best for your pupils and intervene quickly when teaching is not of the standard you expect. Pupils achieve well across their subjects; the proportions reaching the expected standards at key stages 1 and 2 were well above average in 2016, continuing a trend of high attainment. You are honest about the reasons why the progress of the most able, and of some middle-ability pupils, was not as strong as it might have been in 2016 and have taken steps to address this issue. Nonetheless, you recognise that there is more to do to ensure that greater proportions of pupils make accelerated progress and achieve the higher standard across all subjects.

You and your senior leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress through regular visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. You are quick to identify and develop those teachers whose practice is securing strong progress for their pupils, to ensure that they receive further opportunities to develop their teaching and leadership skills. Several of these teachers have left the school to take up leadership posts elsewhere, which has left some parents concerned about the turnover of staff. You have taken steps to ensure that new teachers are helped to settle in quickly.

You work effectively with governors to assess all areas of the school's performance and to put in place actions to improve those areas that need improvement. For example, you identified that you needed to accelerate the progress that pupils make in mathematics and in response to this issue, have devised and put in place a detailed action plan. You introduced a new curriculum in mathematics, designed to improve pupils' fluency and their conceptual understanding of mathematics. You have carefully monitored the implementation of this curriculum and have identified those areas that need further attention. Greater proportions of current pupils are now making at least the progress they should in mathematics, with a higher proportion on track to achieve the higher standard. You acknowledge that on occasion, action planning has become overly complicated, with several different plans in existence that cover some of the same issues. This has meant that some of your monitoring activities have lacked precise focus. You recognise a need to simplify planning processes, and ensure that the monitoring activities that flow from action plans are closely focused on the key issues.

You and your staff have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. For example, you have revised the curriculum so that it is engaging and exciting for pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils are helped to become resourceful, resilient learners who know how to find the answer for themselves. You undertook a thorough review of the support in place of the lowest attaining pupils. These pupils are now making accelerated progress across the school. In the work we looked at, standards of presentation were high and pupils had been helped to develop their handwriting skills. High standards have become routine.

Although your school is a converter, 'standalone' academy, you recognise the value of working with other schools to learn from their practice, and share your own. For example, you work closely with the Kyra Teaching Schools Alliance, through which your staff are able to share and learn from best practice. You are a local leader of education; your two deputy headteachers and the early years leader are all specialist leaders of education. As such, you contribute to the development of leadership and teaching in other schools. Leaders of partner schools have carried out a 'peer review' of your school. While these informal links help you to identify and address less effective areas, you rightly recognise the need for a more formal, more regular and more rigorous external evaluation of your school.

Pupils are rightly proud of their school. At lunchtime, some of the Year 4 pupils took me on an impromptu tour, keen to show me the displays of their learning about Magna Carta, explain the house system and talk about the clubs they can take part in. They know what the school's values mean for how they should treat each other and understand the importance of respecting people for who they are. The Year 6 pupils I met with echoed these views. They appreciate the opportunities they have to develop their leadership skills and contribute to the improvement of the school. Those who read to me did so with confidence and fluency, and enjoyed talking about the books and authors they enjoy. A culture of reading is well embedded across the school; in the early years, children took great enjoyment in acting out the story they were reading. The changes you have made to the guided reading sessions are having a positive impact in enabling pupils to develop a deeper understanding of texts and language. From the youngest to the eldest, pupils I spoke with engaged very readily in discussion and were able to use a high level of language to discuss their learning.

Governors are skilled and committed, and have a very accurate view of the school. Through the school improvement committee, they ensure that leaders, including subject leaders, are held to account for the effectiveness of their actions to raise achievement. The data working group scrutinises performance information carefully to ensure that gaps are swiftly addressed. Governors work with you to set the strategic direction of the school and play a full part in evaluating its effectiveness. They are forward thinking, and keen to ensure the future success of the school as well as secure short-term improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You keep detailed and accurate records of all concerns that are raised.

Your records show that staff take swift and appropriate action in response to any concerns they have about pupils' welfare. You work effectively with parents and with other agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get help early on, before problems escalate. Where pupils do experience difficulties, you think creatively to find solutions to help them attend school and work through their difficulties.

Through regular training, you ensure that staff are kept up to date with the potential signs of abuse and understand the procedures for recording and reporting their concerns. You regularly discuss all concerns with the two deputy headteachers, and in this way ensure that you continue to monitor the welfare of pupils.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have taken effective action to raise achievement in mathematics. They closely monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress to ensure that the new curriculum is enabling them to make at least good progress. Governors evaluate the effectiveness of the school's action plan and hold leaders rigorously to account for raising standards in mathematics. Information provided by the school, coupled with scrutiny of pupils' work, indicate that a greater proportion of pupils across the school are now on track to achieve the higher standard in mathematics.
- Regular meetings of the school improvement committee ensure that leaders and governors keep a close focus on the progress made by different groups of pupils. Actions taken to improve progress in reading are proving effective, especially for boys and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Changes to how guided reading sessions are organised have enabled teachers to target support where it is most needed. These sessions are now helping pupils to develop their writing skills, by tasking pupils to look at how writers use language to affect the reader and to use these texts as models for their own writing.
- Teachers have ensured that pupils, especially those of higher and middle ability, have a clearer understanding of how to work at greater depth within the expected standard in writing. Pupils are confident in checking and re-drafting work to ensure that it meets the higher expectations. A review of the curriculum has led to more explicit teaching of writing skills in subjects other than English. Teachers ensure that pupils refer to their writing targets when they undertake written work in other subjects. However, there is more to do to ensure that pupils routinely use their writing skills to improve their written work in other subjects, and that pupils of middle and higher ability are regularly challenged by their work in all subjects.
- In the early years provision, leaders have taken effective action to raise achievement. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development rose significantly in 2016 to be well above the national level. The differences in outcomes for girls and boys have considerably diminished. Leaders work well with their feeder pre-schools to ensure that transition arrangements are smooth and that they know and can address any gaps in children's learning once they begin school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils of middle and higher ability are routinely challenged by the work they do, so that more of them achieve higher standards
- action plans are streamlined, and the subsequent monitoring activities are closely focused on the precise areas for improvement

- links with external agencies, such as the diocese and other partner schools, are used to best effect so that the school has regular, external, rigorous scrutiny of its work.

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

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and governors to discuss the school's progress since its previous inspection and the key lines of enquiry we agreed at the start of the inspection. We made joint visits to classes in all year groups, looked at a range of pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning. I viewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records of monitoring activities. I looked at a range of information relating to safeguarding, including records of safeguarding concerns, and considered information about the current progress of pupils. I spoke formally with a group of Year 6 pupils, observed pupils at lunchtime and spoke informally with parents as they collected their children from school. I considered the 71 responses to Parent View, as well as the 70 responses to the free-text service, the nine responses to the staff survey and the 20 responses to the pupil survey.