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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Ms Sarah Morris
Headteacher
All Souls' Church of England Primary School
Stanley Road
Folkestone
Kent
CT19 4LG

Dear Ms Morris

Short inspection of All Souls' Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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.

Parents, staff and pupils are fulsome in their praise of all aspects of the school. The parent and staff survey responses were very positive indeed. All the staff feel highly motivated, well supported and are very proud to be part of the school. The school has a very welcoming atmosphere which is underpinned by shared values. There is a strong sense of purpose, respect for and celebration of differences, which is important in this vibrant, diverse community.

Following the last inspection, there was a drop in the standards achieved by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Rapid and successful action was taken so that pupils' skills improved. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception has risen over each of the last few years to well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has also improved over time and looks likely to improve further this year. Last year some pupils, particularly a relatively large group of disadvantaged pupils who joined the school towards the end of key stage 2, found the national assessment tests tricky and results were disappointing. You were also disappointed that more of your most able pupils did not achieve better.

You and your colleagues have accurately identified the achievement of the most able and disadvantaged pupils as the key aspects requiring improvement. Everyone in school is aware of, and striving with a clear sense of purpose and direction, to achieve these goals. The school's checks and the work in the books show that most pupils are making at least reasonable, and often rapid, progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are still some gaps between the achievement of different groups, with disadvantaged pupils having the most ground to make up. Pupils are on track to achieve much better than last year at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. This is particularly true of the most able pupils who are responding well to the increased challenge which your teachers are building into everyday learning.

The previous inspection report recommended that the school should give pupils more opportunities to reflect on and demonstrate their understanding of their learning, share outstanding teaching practice and improve the teaching of reading. You have gone to town in addressing these aspects! There are many opportunities built into everyday life when pupils can discuss their thinking, ask questions and explain their learning. You have successfully developed pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm for reading. The school has a strongly collaborative ethos where staff work in teams, share ideas, plan together and learn from each other.

The previous inspection highlighted several strengths, including good teaching, high expectations, good opportunities for developing English and mathematics skills across different subjects, and effective leadership including governance. These continue to be strong. The inspection also highlighted good use of the additional government funding for groups such as children from service families and disadvantaged pupils. You continue to use this funding very carefully and your pupils from service families and minority ethnic groups achieve well. You are concerned that disadvantaged pupils do not always achieve as well as other pupils, and you commissioned a recent external review to check on the effectiveness of the strategies you use. It will be useful to unpick very carefully what is working well and what is not, so that you can focus funds and attention on those strategies which are most effective.

Safeguarding is effective.

Almost all parents and the staff say that pupils are safe, happy and well looked after in school. The pupils I met during the visit agree. Governors and senior leaders have a good understanding of safer recruitment practices and there are secure systems for checking and recording the suitability of adults before they are allowed to work with the children. Four members of staff, including male and female staff, have completed the enhanced training for designated safeguarding leaders. All the other staff have also completed recent up-to-date training covering all relevant aspects. The records show that staff are conscientious in recording and reporting concerns. The systems are well organised and efficient and sensitive information is kept securely. There are suitable procedures for issues such as pupils who become 'missing' or to highlight any concerns about extremism. The school maintains valuable relationships with external colleagues such as early help and social services. Governors carry out their responsibilities and monitor regularly to make sure that

systems are operating appropriately. They have used information gained from visits to a neighbouring school to improve the quality and safety of the environment.

Attendance dipped last year with some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, missing too much school. Strategies to improve attendance are working. High attendance is rewarded and the school has recently become involved with a project to encourage all pupils to attend every day. Overall attendance is rising and is now at the national average. Individual case studies show marked improvements in attendance due to close working with specific pupils and their families. There are corresponding improvements in those pupils' academic achievement and their enjoyment of school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of my visit, we discussed the lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. We agreed to explore the impact of leadership on some important aspects of school life; progress on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, including reading; the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and the achievement of the most able pupils.
- Governors know the school very well. They, and senior leaders, are implementing a sharply focused plan to raise expectations and standards. Staff training and monitoring systems are closely linked to the key priorities. An example of the positive impact is very evident in the younger pupils' writing books with increasing evidence of extended pieces of writing. All leaders, including the English and mathematics teams, work well collaboratively with a clear sense of purpose and direction. All staff strongly agree that they know what the goals are and are determined to achieve them.
- There is a strong emphasis on making learning interesting with opportunities to link the learning across different subjects. There are also practical, collaborative activities such as the art days which happened earlier this week and resulted in several impressive pieces of art now on display in the school hall. Pupils spoke of their involvement with these activities with enjoyment and pride. Pupils are exceptionally polite, friendly and keen to talk about their school and their achievements. They hold doors and gates open without prompting. The school council is currently heavily involved in making sure that pupils' ideas are used to improve the school's behaviour policy. All of the pupils I met in class and at lunchtime were very complimentary about their teachers.
- Improving the achievement of the most able pupils is one of the key priorities in the school improvement plan. There is evidence in the pupils' books that teachers routinely plan lessons which include activities to challenge pupils to work in greater depth or at higher levels. The learning observed in lessons, and in the books, shows that pupils are covering a lot of ground, experiencing real challenge and producing high-quality work. Pupils said that the school's challenging, but fun, approach to learning was a major strength. In Reception, children tackle, with gusto, some challenging mathematics such as doubling, adding and subtracting numbers. They also write independently and are very keen to share the results. In the mathematics lessons visited, the pupils were

keen to achieve well. Year 6 pupils persisted, even when they found the work very difficult. Pupils are routinely encouraged to reason, problem solve and explain their thinking. The older pupils manipulate different structures such as ellipses and figures of speech including personification to bring tension and style into their writing.

- The school uses various strategies to develop pupils' thinking skills and ability to use questioning. Some strategies have only recently been introduced and teachers and pupils are still a little inexperienced in their use. There are still occasions when pupils show that they can do something and are not moved on quickly enough, or they are not quite clear about what they have to do next.
- There has been a steady rise, over the past few years, in pupils' ability to use their knowledge of phonics to read and to spell words. There are high-quality texts linked to the termly topics to develop a love of reading and extend pupils' vocabulary. Pupils speak knowledgeably and enthusiastically about these books. In Reception, there are interesting role play areas and activities based on 'Charlie and the chocolate factory' by Roald Dahl. In a lower key stage 2 class, pupils have designed and made some interesting models and artefacts linked to 'The iron man' by Ted Hughes. There are good opportunities for pupils to examine and identify the use of vocabulary and stylistic strategies in different texts. There is a strong focus on encouraging pupils to read for enjoyment, as well as for learning. There are lots of reading challenges and high-quality books which pupils are keen to read. The school carried out a survey of home reading habits and, following this, has encouraged an increase in the use of the library. Staff say that these strategies are effective both in improving skills and raising enjoyment in reading. At a recent book fair, parents spent three times the normal amount on buying books for their children. This suggests strongly that the strategies are working.
- Leaders analyse very carefully how well individual pupils are achieving, their behaviour and attitudes to learning. They identify precisely which groups need different types of support and opportunities. There are many opportunities for visits, clubs, including a homework club, practical learning and activities which support emotional well-being. A strong focus on improving speech, language and communication, and the expertise of the early years leader in promoting these important skills, are being used to good effect in Reception so that disadvantaged children in the early years achieve well. There is some variability between year groups in terms of the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. In some there are no gaps and in others the gaps are wide. Although disadvantaged pupils in some year groups are making similar rates of progress to their classmates, this is not fast enough to help them close existing gaps.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that different groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, achieve as well as possible by:

- embedding the current strategies to extend the learning challenges for all pupils and further increasing the opportunities for pupils to reason and explain, use and apply their learning in different situations
- making sure that they use additional government funds in the most effective ways so that disadvantaged pupils make accelerated rates of progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the acting deputy headteacher, inclusion manager, English and mathematics teams, office manager, an improvement adviser from the local authority and seven governors. The director of education from the diocese joined us for the feedback. You and I toured the school during the day to observe the quality of teaching and learning in all age groups. While we did this, we took the opportunity to look at the pupils' books and the work on display. I had lunch with some key stage 1 pupils and met with a group of older key stage 2 pupils. I looked at a range of the school's documentation including information about pupils' achievement and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you and the senior leaders, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the current improvement plan.

I took account of an in-house survey of staff completed on the day of the visit and 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I received 11 written comments from parents, read a school survey of parents' views, and met some parents at the start of the day.