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Caroline Shingleton
Headteacher
Wethersfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Shingleton

Short inspection of Wethersfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2018, 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 2014

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 continuing to ensure that standards are above average, and pupils are making good progress because of good teaching. Under your leadership, staff work well as a team for the benefit of all pupils. You are providing a warm, friendly family atmosphere in the school, based on your strong ethos and values, where parents and staff feel valued. This was reflected in their strongly positive responses in the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and text responses during the inspection. One parent typically wrote, 'This is such a friendly school, where my child is doing well. All the staff are caring, and the school is well run.'

You receive good support from school leaders and governors in driving improvements forward. You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection effectively. Pupils' progress in writing has improved because you have provided more opportunities for pupils to write at length. Pupils also have a clear idea of how well they are doing and how to achieve higher standards. A strength is the achievement of Year 1 pupils in phonics, where the proportions reaching the expected standards in the phonics screening check have been consistently above average over the past three years. Pupils are also making good progress in English grammar and punctuation, although a very small number of parents raised concerns about the teaching of spelling. You are rightly addressing this through the current school improvement plan and this will be developed further as soon as you appoint a new

leader for English. Your self-evaluation is accurate, and leaders are using this well to continue to set clear priorities for improvement.

Parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils' behaviour is very good. Pupils' attendance is above average, they enjoy coming to school and have good attitudes to learning. They are well motivated and concentrate on their activities. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development effectively, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection, pupils spoke enthusiastically about their visit to a school in Whitechapel where they enjoyed learning alongside pupils from different cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs to their own. In art, pupils have produced good-quality paintings having studied Neolithic cave paintings and Aboriginal drawings. Pupils benefit from good opportunities to learn about British values. Children in Reception learn to take turns and share, and older pupils take responsibility in looking after the youngest pupils during breaktimes.

Governors are providing good support and challenge to the school through regular visits. They have a realistic view of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. They carefully monitor the progress of pupils by reviewing the school's data and asking probing questions. Governors are ensuring that all policies are up to date and legal requirements are met.

Safeguarding is effective.

You are working closely with parents and carers to develop a strong culture for safeguarding in the school. Your staff and governors are implementing the school's policies and procedures to promote the safety and well-being of all pupils effectively, including children in the early years. For example, during the cold weather most children in the early years wanted to learn outside. Your staff ensured that all children wore warm clothing and were well supervised and the cleaner in charge carefully gritted the outdoor area. As a result, all children explored the ice and snow enthusiastically and safely as they deepened their understanding of the world around them.

All safeguarding training is up to date and you ensure that the records of checks made on the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils are thorough and meet requirements. Staff, parents and pupils agree that pupils feel safe. Bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively. Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion and handle equipment safely

Inspection findings

- In order to establish that the school remained good, I wanted to find out if different pupils at key stage 2, such as those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, were making equally good progress as other pupils in mathematics. This was because in 2017 disadvantaged pupils were not doing as well as other pupils in mathematics compared to other subjects. Your latest information about the progress that pupils are making is showing that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making good progress in mathematics from their different starting points. This is because

leaders have ensured that support staff have benefited from specialist training in mathematics. In discussion, learning support assistants explained how the new scheme of work in mathematics is enabling pupils to deepen their reasoning skills more effectively

- However, the new scheme has recently been introduced at key stage 1 and is not fully embedded in practice. It has not yet been introduced at key stage 2. As a result, pupils' work and the school's data show that pupils in Years 3 and 4 are not doing as well in mathematics as those in years 5 and 6.
- I also sought to determine that the most able pupils at key stage 1 were working at greater depth in reading, because in 2017 the proportions of these pupils working at greater depth was well below the national average. The school's latest accurate information about the progress that pupils across the school are making, particularly the most able, shows a significant increase in those working at greater depth in reading. This also reflects the good progress that the most able pupils in key stage 1 are now making in reading.
- Finally, I wanted to ascertain if the gap between girls' and boys' achievement in the early years was narrowing in reading and in working towards a good level of development. This was because in 2017 girls were not doing as well as boys.
- The school's latest information about the progress children are making, as seen in their learning journals, shows that there are no significant differences in the progress of boys and girls in reading, or in other areas of learning. The display of children's work shows that boys and girls are making the same progress in a range of subjects, including mathematical development and creative development. For example, girls and boys both used a triangle and a rectangle to draw a picture of a rocket. In the outside learning area, boys and girls were exploring their environment through play with equal enthusiasm. Current tracking data shows that both girls and boys are making equally good progress in reading and in working towards a good level of development across all areas of learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers introduce and embed the new mathematics scheme of work at key stage 2 to enable all pupils, particularly those in Years 3 and 4, to make good progress in mathematics
- a subject leader for English is appointed as soon as possible, to maintain and improve the good progress of pupils, particularly in spelling.

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

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and three governors and held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. I carried out joint visits with senior leaders to every class, including Reception, to look at the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. I also looked at samples of pupils' work and learning journals. I heard a few pupils at key stage 1 read and I talked to pupils about their learning. I took account of the views of parents by looking at the 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and their text response. I also met with nine parents who collected their children from school. I examined the questionnaire responses from staff.

I looked at a range of documentation, including: the single central record of checks made on staff and visitors to determine their suitability to work with children; safeguarding policies and risk assessments; attendance figures and records of incidents of behaviour; minutes of governing body meetings and records of visits; and your self-evaluation document and school improvement plan.