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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Miss Cathy Dunleavy
Headteacher
Trefonen CofE Primary School
School Lane
Trefonen
Oswestry
Shropshire
SY10 9DY

Dear Miss Dunleavy

Short inspection of Trefonen Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 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 December 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have established a clear ethos of care and nurture in your school. This is a caring community where pupils' well-being is of high priority and therefore staff ensure that pupils are looked after well. Pupils' behaviour and personal development remain strong. Parents also recognise the positive ethos, with one parent saying: 'There is an incredible community spirit in the village of Trefonen, which reflects in the character of the school. It really is like a family, nurturing and caring, and the children flourish from this sort of environment.'

Following the last inspection, you were asked to improve teaching by making sure most-able pupils are given work that is challenging and to improve the progress of younger girls in mathematics. The mathematics leader has introduced a planned approach to teaching arithmetic and problem-solving across the school. As a result, outcomes in mathematics are improving for all children, including younger girls. However, there is still work to do to ensure that most-able pupils are challenged to reach higher standards in reading and mathematics.

You and your senior leadership team have, rightly, identified that the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics is too low. Similarly, you see boys' reading and writing as aspects that need to improve.

However, leaders at all levels are not strategic or clear enough about what they want to achieve as measurable actions for improvement. Therefore, they are not able to clearly demonstrate the impact of what they have done. This is why improvements have not been as strong as you wish.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding of pupils is a high priority for leaders and staff. Leaders are well trained for their roles and ensure that they keep up to date with relevant guidance and information. Staff are regularly trained and updated. They know what to do if there is a potential safeguarding issue and are alert to any possible incidents. Records are kept securely. Leaders ensure that they meet all their statutory responsibilities and duties.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and that their teachers always listen to them if they have a worry. They told me that although bullying happens occasionally, when it does teachers deal with it very quickly. Pupils are taught to keep safe, including through cycle training, road safety lessons and e-safety lessons. The pupils' mental health is of high priority. Pupils are well valued and have strong relationships with adults in school. Sports and outdoor education are used well to promote healthy lifestyles.

Inspection findings

- At the start of my visit, we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry for the inspection. First, I looked at how effectively pupils in the early years and key stage 1 are taught to read. At the end of early years, the proportion of children who achieved the reading early learning goal has been above the national figure for the past two years. However, the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard in reading was around half of that seen nationally at the end of key stage 1 in 2018. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check declined to below the national figure for the past two years. Not all pupils who read to the inspector were able to use their phonics skills confidently. This is because the books they were reading did not support pupils to apply their phonic knowledge to decode words.
- Most-able pupils say they enjoy reading and read frequently at home. They can confidently name a range of authors and can talk about their likes and dislikes of reading.
- I looked at how leaders were ensuring that the most able pupils were being challenged effectively. Leaders rightly identified this as an area of improvement in writing and mathematics. However, despite a number of actions being implemented, the proportion achieving the higher levels has dropped this year in key stage 2 and has not increased in key stage 1. Although teachers are increasingly aware of the weaknesses in pupils' work, they are not addressing them quickly enough for the pupils to achieve the higher levels.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are attempting to provide more thought-

provoking lessons through probing questions that are beginning to challenge pupils further. As a result, pupils are thinking more deeply and apply their knowledge more successfully.

- I also focused on the quality of mathematics teaching in key stage 1. The leader of mathematics has made a notable difference to the proportion of pupils that reach the expected standard in mathematics. Her action plan shows a similar intent to raise the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels. Teachers support pupils well to become independent and resilient when applying their learning to mathematical problems, for example through the use of visual images and resources. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in the number of pupils who reach the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 1.
- Finally, I looked at how the curriculum has been designed to ensure that it meets the needs of learners. Subject leaders are very passionate about their subjects and can share their vision with confidence. They monitor the delivery and coverage of their subjects, but are not confident in describing the impact their actions have had on the quality of the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- have a clear view of exactly what they want their actions to achieve
- know precisely how they will judge that this has happened
- check frequently and rigorously that the actions are making the desired difference to pupils' learning, especially for boys and the most able
- hold staff to account for making the expected changes and improving pupils' progress where necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Eve Morris
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and a group of pupils. I had a phone conversation with the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. We evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour

and attendance records, and information about safeguarding. I considered the 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I listened to some pupils read. You and I visited every classroom together to observe teaching and learning and to scrutinise pupils' work in their books.