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5 December 2018

Miss Jo Kidby
Headteacher
St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Bolton Lane
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Dear Miss Kidby

Short inspection of St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Ipswich

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

You are rightly proud of your school's caring and compassionate ethos. Your school's Christian values are evident in all areas of your work and they continue to be strengthened and enriched as the number of pupils who attend the school rises and its diversity broadens. You are passionate about the need to continually improve your school, committed to empowering and developing your leaders and focused on ensuring that your pupils get the best possible opportunities. You have rightly developed a new leadership structure that recognises the school's significant growth over recent years. Leaders fully support your vision and they value the high-quality training with which you provide them. Although your structures now reflect the changing context of the school, you acknowledge that they are still very new and that leaders will continue to benefit from the high levels of support and challenge with which they are currently provided.

Pupils behave well, and they have very positive attitudes to learning. They are proud of their school and they are excellent ambassadors in and out of lessons. Pupils value the extra-curricular opportunities with which they are provided and the positive relationships that they develop with their teachers. One pupil said, 'Our teachers respect our opinions and always try to help us.' Pupils' positive views of the school are shared by their parents and by your staff. Staff said that they are well supported and that they are provided with a wide range of training and

development opportunities. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the school. One parent commented: 'St Margaret's is a great school... the head and staff are brilliant.'

The school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. Good-quality professional development, improved support for staff and greater consistency in the delivery of foundation subjects, such as science and technology, have contributed to the overall improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils' combined key stage 2 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standard has risen over the last three years and is above the national average. Pupils' overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 remains in line with national averages.

You are accurate in your assessment of the school's overall effectiveness and its strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, your priorities for improvement are appropriate and leaders know what is expected of them. However, you acknowledge that your evaluation of pupils' outcomes has been overly generous in the past; this is because it placed more emphasis on pupils' overall attainment than on the progress that they had made from their different starting points.

Governors provide you with effective support and challenge; they too know the school well and are passionate about its continued improvement. Governors support the school's development through their contributions at full governing body meetings, their various committees and their visits to meet school leaders. Both you and governors understand the need to ensure that more pupils, especially the most able, attain at the higher standard by the time that they leave the school. You are all also committed to embedding and developing your new leadership structures and assessment systems in order to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve as the school grows.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Governors have a clear understanding of their safeguarding duties and are effective in carrying them out. Leaders undertake all appropriate checks on staff and these records are scrutinised on a regular basis by a nominated member of the governing body. Staff are well trained; they know how to identify any signs that pupils are at risk and what to do if they have any concerns. Staff understand the school's safeguarding systems and they said that safeguarding is a part of the school's culture. Safeguarding records are well kept, and any child protection referrals are monitored tenaciously.

Pupils said that they feel safe at school; staff, and the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, agreed. Pupils said that, on the rare occasions it happens, bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively. They said that

they attend a caring school and that there is always someone to help them if needed. Pupils talked positively about how they are taught to stay safe through personal, social and health education lessons that cover topics such as e-safety, bullying and road safety.

Inspection findings

- I pursued a number of lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school continues to be good. My first question related to the impact of leaders' actions to improve progress in writing at key stage 2, especially for boys.
- Within the last 18 months leaders have reviewed their approaches to the teaching of writing. As a result, there have been significant changes to the texts that are used to support pupils' writing development. Texts are now more relevant to pupils' interests, and teaching activities enable pupils to develop their depth of writing. For example, teachers use high-quality questioning to support pupils to plan their writing more effectively. The recent introduction of the new leadership structure has also strengthened both the leadership of English and the monitoring of pupils' outcomes across key stage 2.
- As a result of leaders' actions, the differences in quality between boys' and girls' writing are reducing. At the start of this academic year, both boys' and girls' overall attainment at the expected standard in writing was largely above the national average across key stage 2. Since then, all year groups have continued to make strong progress in writing. Pupils said that writing has a high priority in the school and that expectations of them are equally high. Although pupils' progress in writing is improving across key stage 2, not enough of them attain at the higher standard.
- My second line of enquiry was about the extent to which leaders ensure that pupils attend school regularly and behave well. Leaders are rigorous in their monitoring of attendance and they work closely with pupils and their families, offering support when required. As a result, overall absence rates and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school are both in line with national averages. The absence and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils has been higher than their non-disadvantaged peers for the last two years. However, the absence and persistent absence of this group of pupils has decreased significantly this year.
- Leaders have clear processes in place to support the management of pupils' behaviour and they are committed to ensuring that rewards and sanctions are used to good effect. In lessons, and around the school, pupils are polite, friendly and well behaved. They work well together and are respectful of each other's opinions. The proportion of pupils who received fixed-period exclusions last year was slightly above the national average, but leaders work closely with these pupils and they can demonstrate long-term improvements in their behaviour. Teachers, and the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, said that pupils behave well.
- Finally, I checked the extent to which high-quality teaching is ensuring that the most able pupils are being challenged to attain at the highest standards. The

improvements that leaders have brought about in the overall quality of teaching are evident in the high expectations, strong subject knowledge and effective questioning of many teachers. Pupils also say that they are normally challenged in lessons. However, the impact of leaders' actions to increase levels of challenge is mixed. Pupils do not always undertake activities that are closely matched to their starting points and leaders' assessment systems are not fully effective in allowing them to monitor the progress of the most able pupils. As a result, the most able pupils in the school make broadly similar progress in reading and mathematics to pupils with similar starting points nationally, while their progress in writing is weaker.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers increase the level of challenge in lessons so that pupils, especially the most able, make more progress and attain at the highest levels, especially in writing
- the recent changes made to leadership structures are embedded and developed, so that leaders at all levels are challenged and supported to bring about further improvements
- assessment systems are developed further to enable leaders to track the progress of pupils, and groups of pupils, more effectively.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Gee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, school leaders, other school staff, governors and a group of pupils. I made short visits to a range of classes to observe teaching, look at pupils' books and to see pupils at work. In addition, I reviewed a sample of key stage 2 English workbooks alongside school leaders. I scrutinised the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, its development plan and other documentation, including the record of pre-employment checks and child protection records. I also considered the 68 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, alongside their 31 free text responses. I met informally with a number of parents at the end of the school day.