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Mrs Lelia Berkeley
Headteacher
St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Marks Tey
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Dear Mrs Berkeley

Short inspection of St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Marks Tey

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your passion for providing the best education for the pupils at St Andrews is shared by governors, senior leaders and staff. You lead with a clear sense of purpose and warmth. The school provides a supportive learning environment where expectations are high. Pupils leave the school as confident and articulate children who are well prepared for secondary school. One parent commented that the school 'encourages independence and the development of the whole person'.

Pupils are happy and proud of their school. Classrooms are bright, stimulating environments where enthusiastic pupils are taught by teachers who know them well. Relationships within the classroom between adults and pupils and between the pupils are positive and respectful. Teachers plan interesting work that is well matched to pupils' levels of ability. Pupils learn how to use technology to enhance their work. For example, Year 5 pupils were engrossed in evaluating the film documentary they had made on flooding. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and demonstrate high levels of concentration in lessons.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for through a curriculum that includes a full range of academic, technological and arts subjects, and physical education. The plethora of pupils' high-quality work around the school

celebrates their successes in these subjects. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the leadership opportunities available to them such as becoming play leaders and running play activities or clubs at lunchtime. Through these posts of responsibility pupils are learning to work independently, to take responsibility, and the importance of good organisation and gaining self-confidence. Pupils also feel that senior staff listen to, and carefully consider, their suggestions.

You have successfully addressed the issues from the last inspection. Pupils receive age-appropriate precise feedback that enables them to improve the quality of their work. Pupils make the necessary improvements to their work and as a result outcomes are good.

Staff appreciate and engage fully in the training you offer. This training continues to improve the consistency of teaching quality across the school as it is tailored to meet the needs of individual staff as well as whole-school improvements. Learning support assistants are included in whole-school training and receive training in specialised areas, such as speech and language or phonics, ensuring that they are able to be highly effective in supporting pupils in class and in small groups.

You are ably supported by senior leaders and a suitably qualified governing body. Governors monitor the work of the school via detailed reports and visits to see the school at work. They ask probing questions and provide leaders with a good balance of support and challenge.

Children in the early years get off to a good start to their education. Children learn in a safe and supportive environment where learning activities are well matched to their needs. The most able children are sufficiently challenged and I saw some excellent examples of children's writing and mathematics work. Children of all abilities make good progress from their starting points and the proportion of children reaching a good level of development remains above average.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other school leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are effective. All the appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers who work in the school. The identity of all visitors is checked. You ensure that staff training is up to date, including the training for governors, and it is at an appropriate level. The designated safeguarding governor regularly checks to ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust and fit for purpose. Staff are vigilant and fully understand their responsibility to safeguard pupils. All records of referrals and actions taken are carefully documented.

Pupils that I met during the inspection all told me they felt safe in the school and that they can talk to adults if they have any concerns. Pupils understand the difference between falling out and bullying and told me that should bullying occur staff will take the appropriate action. The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe in a variety of situations and internet safety is taught at an age-appropriate level. The website contains a range of up-to-date information for parents on

keeping their child safe when using technology.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that the first area I would look at was the progress of current pupils in English and mathematics. I wanted to look at this because although the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 was above average, progress was average. You acknowledged that accelerating pupil progress was a key priority and you have addressed this by introducing different levels of challenge in learning activities. Pupils are set the most appropriate challenge for their ability.
- We looked at the quality of teaching in both subjects and scrutinised the work in pupils' books to examine the progress pupils currently make. We saw many examples of good progress in writing for most groups of pupils. By the time pupils are in Year 6, the overwhelming majority of pupils write well for a variety of purposes and use a range of appropriate vocabulary, punctuation and grammar effectively. Pupils are given ample opportunities to apply mathematics to solve problems. Evidence in pupils' books shows most teachers swiftly move pupils on to the more challenging work. Consequently, they make good progress.
- We agreed that a greater proportion of pupils are making rapid progress from their starting points. However, there is still further work to do to ensure that all groups, especially the most able, are provided with work that will enable them to attain greater depth in mathematics and English.
- To ascertain whether pupils are making good progress in subjects other than English and mathematics, we looked at the quality of pupils' work in science and topic work. Work indicates an improvement in the quality of teaching in science since September 2016. Pupils now write up their investigation findings effectively using scientific language and arrive at accurate conclusions based on their findings.
- Humanities subjects are taught through a range of topics. Pupils are given the opportunity to use and develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in these subjects. However, there are times when the work can impede pupils' progress as it is not sufficiently demanding for pupils to deepen their subject knowledge and skills.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at the current attainment of boys in key stage 1 in phonics and reading. We agreed that this was appropriate as the percentage of boys meeting the phonics threshold has been lower than average for three years. However, 2016 saw an improvement on previous years. When I visited a phonics lesson, I found the teaching to be well structured and adults quickly correcting pupils' mispronunciations of letter sounds. The school's attainment information indicates that almost all boys are on track to meet the phonics threshold in Year 1. In Year 2, all boys who did not do so at the end of Year 1 are in line to meet the threshold. Pupils with speech, language and communication needs receive specialist support and are making good progress with their language and reading.

- I listened to pupils read and joined a group of boys in their paired reading. All of the pupils read daily both in school and at home. Pupils use their phonics knowledge appropriately to read unfamiliar words. All pupils understood the story they were reading and were able to answer questions about the characters.
- We discussed the systems used to track pupils' progress. I found a robust system in place which allows leaders to quickly identify individuals who are not making expected levels of progress. Individual learning plans are developed to meet the needs of pupils and as a result pupils quickly catch up. However, you are not yet looking at the progress of groups of pupils, for example middle-ability pupils, from their starting points in order to look at strengths and weaknesses in progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to challenge pupils in mathematics and English in order to accelerate pupil progress so that a higher proportion of pupils attain greater depth
- work in subjects other than English and mathematics is sufficiently demanding to deepen their subject knowledge and skills
- systems are in place to measure the progress of different groups of pupils.

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

Caroline Pardy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, senior leaders and three members of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with the standards commissioner from the local authority. We visited all classes to look at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all subjects with a particular focus on phonics. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, during lessons, and at lunchtime. I talked to members of the school council and four school ambassadors who provided me with a guided tour of the school. Together we looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects in all year groups. I listened to a group of pupils read and visited a guided reading session. I also looked at a number of documents, including information about pupils' progress, your school self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, documents relating to safeguarding and information posted on the school's website. I considered the views of 75

parents who replied to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 35 free text responses. I also considered the 101 responses to the school's own questionnaire. I reviewed the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.