

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



7 March 2017

Maria Rumsey  
Headteacher  
St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School  
Barnard Road  
Galleywood  
Chelmsford  
Essex  
CM2 8RR

Dear Mrs Rumsey

### **Short inspection of St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 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 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained a good quality of education and has successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Since your arrival in 2015, your strong conviction and clear vision have created a culture of high expectations. Governors describe you as someone who has made a 'significant difference to the richness of the school, the driver that was needed'. You quickly identified the key areas needing improvement, including the teaching of English and mathematics. This focus has meant that standards have risen, and the firm foundations that you have established are ready to build on further.

The school is a calm and happy place to learn. You have ensured that pupils have high expectations for behaviour and achievement in the classroom, but also how they conduct themselves around the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and caring. Pupils are very polite, kind and thoughtful. Parents overwhelmingly support and appreciate what the school does for their children. Many comment about the enthusiasm for learning which is actively encouraged and that children are taught with positivity and kindness. Parents can see the results in their children's improved behaviour towards others and in their learning.

You rightly, when necessary, do not shy away from dealing with issues, and underperformance is challenged in a timely fashion. This ensures that all staff are

clear about your expectations of them to secure the best possible outcomes for all pupils. It is evident that teachers have flourished under your guidance.

You, senior leaders and governors know the school well. This is made possible through consistent, accurate and regular monitoring of teaching, learning and pupils' progress. Governors and senior leaders have clear goals and a shared ambition to improve the school further. Governors are skilful in the way they hold leaders, including subject leaders, to account for their roles and responsibilities in improving the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, your leadership team and the governing body ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in your school. You continue to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and your approach to record-keeping is exemplary. The knowledge that your staff have about your pupils, coupled with the high standard of training that your staff and governors receive, means that staff are well placed to spot signs and symptoms of abuse. Pupils are safe and stay safe.

Pupils that I met during the inspection, both in meetings and while visiting the classrooms, were unanimous in their views that they are happy at school and enjoy their learning. They feel safe because the adults care about them and look after them well. One child said, 'It's brilliant to be a child in our school.' If any problems arise between pupils that cannot be sorted out between them, staff soon deal with them in a fair way. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including the safe use of the internet and about issues they may encounter in the wider world.

Parents also received high-quality training to support them in their role to keep their children safe, including on the internet.

### **Inspection findings**

- I examined the progress of the disadvantaged pupils who receive support through pupil premium funding. I looked at this in the light of the 2016 test results, where these pupils did not perform as well as others nationally, and because the evaluation of the impact of spending on the school's website was unclear. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. This is because you have addressed any underperformance from the past, and improvements in teaching across the school have enabled these pupils to catch up on their learning. Teachers track their progress closely, and the work in books shows that there has been an increasing rate of progress this year, especially in mathematics which has been a focus.
- You and your team give careful attention to raising the aspirations and meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils. You enrich their experiences considerably. Disadvantaged pupils gain places at the local grammar school because of the 11+ club. A large proportion of disadvantaged pupils learn musical instruments because you believe that this teaches them skills for life such as perseverance,

determination and musicality.

- You are tackling absence amongst pupils, but there is more to do, especially for pupils who are disadvantaged. The pastoral care worker has clear procedures, including gaining support from external providers and regular contact with families. You now want to find best practice to narrow the attendance gap further between disadvantaged pupils and others.
- My next area of focus for the inspection was achievement in mathematics. The outcomes for Year 6 in mathematics in 2016 were much lower than those in reading and writing, especially for the most able pupils. These results are a legacy of teaching that was not effective before your arrival. You have identified specific gaps in basic number skills and understanding, including times tables. Pupils discussed that this year they have enjoyed the new system of working towards times tables certificates, and this knowledge has helped them to solve number problems more quickly. All groups of pupils are now making good progress in developing mathematical skills to help them to complete calculations quickly and correctly.
- You have ensured that staff have training on how to give pupils regular opportunities to apply their skills when solving problems in mathematics. The large majority of teachers have implemented their new skills effectively to ensure that problem solving happens on a regular basis.
- More effective teaching than in the past has given pupils the opportunities to develop and explain their mathematical reasoning. However, as you have identified, not all teachers plan sufficiently for pupils to deepen their understanding or expect them to explain how they have arrived at their answers. Where practice is not as strong, pupils undertake many questions requiring them to practise a skill they have already mastered. This takes time away from tackling more challenging work.
- My final area of focus for the inspection was the extent to which pupils develop skills in areas other than English and mathematics. Leaders recognise that there is a need to make improvements in some subjects. Subject leaders for science and design and technology have used external training and support from senior leaders to establish clear plans for improvement. The processes that they have put in place have ensured that these subjects are now more prominent in the school curriculum and pupils are developing science and technology skills well. However, other subject leaders have not been as effective in ensuring that teaching and learning in their subjects is as consistently effective.
- The leadership team had taken effective action by identifying science as a focus for development during this school year. The improvements are clear to see. Pupils enjoy the now regular opportunities for experimental investigation work. They particularly enjoy predicting what is going to happen and then testing if they are correct. Outcomes for children in science are now much better, especially in Year 6.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching and learning is consistently effective across subjects
- the school does more to improve attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- pupils' mathematical investigation skills improve by giving them more regular opportunities to solve complicated problems, and by giving pupils more opportunities to explain how they arrived at their specific answers.

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

Cassandra Williams  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- I met you and your senior leadership team, as well as other members of staff with leadership responsibility. I met with a large number of your governors. I also had a meeting with the local authority adviser.
- You accompanied me when I visited classrooms. I also observed pupils as they moved around the school. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics and curriculum books. I also met with a group of pupils. In addition, I took account of the 76 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- I considered the school's analysis of pupils' recent performance.
- I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe and records of training and safeguarding checks.