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Mrs Mandy West
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs West

Short inspection of High Wych Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your senior colleagues provide effective leadership, continually finding ways to improve the school. The decisions you make are based on your clear evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development. You bring enthusiasm and optimism to your work, characteristics which colleagues, governors and parents and carers recognise and respect. The vast majority of parents are very happy with their school, appreciating the excellent start children receive in the Nursery and Reception classes in particular.

Nearly all the parents and carers I spoke to informally at the start of the day were pleased with the school. Typical comments included, 'The teachers do a great job and they know my child's needs really well' and, 'I get lots of information about the curriculum so I can help my son at home.' These views were endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the 56 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, and by the majority of parents who texted about their perceptions of the school. Nevertheless, some parents also believe that there is scope for pupils in key stage 2 to make even more progress and others feel that there has been a high turnover of staff recently.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They are polite and respectful to each other, and they are courteous to adults.

Since the previous inspection, you have commissioned an external review of governance and implemented the findings, in order to create a more efficient and streamlined governing body. As a result, governors now know the school well. Governors take decisions informed by responses to the challenging questions they ask, and by their careful analysis of the information they receive. Governors visit the school to monitor its work, and they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors offer a good level of support and professional challenge to senior leaders.

Also since the previous inspection, you have improved the quality of feedback teachers provide for pupils and you have made good use of the support you have received from 'Herts for learning', in order to develop the skills of your staff. Your decision to invest in improvements to reading materials, including buying some books specifically designed to appeal to boys, has helped improve standards in reading for all pupils. Reading is a strength of the school and staff and governors are rightly conscious of the need to ensure that pupils do equally well in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are well organised, securely maintained and fit for purpose. Records of staff and volunteers' suitability to work with children are clear and comprehensive. Staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe at school. Staff are confident in their understanding of how to report any concerns, and the designated safeguarding leaders liaise appropriately with other agencies, ensuring that concerns are followed up in a timely manner. Leaders know how to seek advice from specialist support staff, should the need arise.

The pupils I spoke to informally around the school told me that they feel safe and happy at school. Parents' views were also positive. The vast majority agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at school, with many choosing to express how secure and assured their children feel.

Inspection findings

- In order to ascertain whether the school remained good, my first key line of enquiry was about the amount of challenge pupils receive in mathematics in key stage 2 and the proportion of pupils achieving at the higher standard at the end of Year 6.
- In 2017, for example, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in mathematics was exactly in line with the national average. In reading, by contrast, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard was well above the national average.

- You are well aware of this anomaly. Work is already taking place to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics. For example, in September 2017, leaders introduced a new structure for mathematics lessons, designed to deepen pupils' understanding and to improve their reasoning and problem-solving skills. From Year 2 up to Year 6, lessons begin with an assessment task which quickly identifies pupils' current skills.
- You also identified the need for pupils to receive more demanding work on fractions. You have introduced a range of support materials to help pupils visualise, manipulate and solve problems in fractions and algebra. There are now regular opportunities for pupils to be 'active learners' of mathematics, often playing mathematical games and using equipment in the hall and outside, which they really enjoy, and which deepen their understanding.
- When we visited lessons, it was evident that these new approaches are already having a positive impact. In one lesson, Year 6 pupils were working together to discuss how to solve word problems. These problems had been specifically identified by their teacher, using information from recent assessments. This work represented a good level of challenge for pupils, and their learning was further reinforced by the teacher's effective use of questioning throughout the lesson.
- The school's own assessment information shows that pupils currently in key stage 2 are making good progress in mathematics. The work in pupils' mathematics books is extremely well presented and appropriately challenging. Nevertheless, leaders are clear that this work to improve mathematics needs to continue. These new approaches to the teaching of mathematics need to become established, so that outcomes improve further for those pupils capable of achieving at the higher standard.
- My second key line of enquiry was about the quality of work pupils undertake in subjects other than English and mathematics. The school's website includes information about the content of this wider curriculum, but it was important to check whether pupils are receiving the same good quality of teaching and learning as they do in English and mathematics.
- The school has developed a topic approach to the curriculum, supported by some specific subject teaching, so that you are sure that the curriculum is covered in sufficient detail.
- There is some notably high-quality work taking place in art across the school. Pottery, for example, fired in the school's own kiln, offers pupils the opportunity to employ different techniques to produce coil pots, bowls and clay tablets. Year 3 pupils have made their own art mosaics as part of a topic on the Romans, and members of the school council are helping to organise an art project to be displayed in the local community.
- Year 6 pupils' history work involves some exciting research into population records from the 1861 census. Pupils enjoyed finding out how local people lived and the jobs they had during the nineteenth century.

- Work in pupils' topic books shows that they are developing a good range of skills across the curriculum. Science books also include plenty of good-quality work, with plenty of opportunities for pupils to carry out and evaluate their own scientific investigations.
- Nevertheless, curriculum leaders who have responsibility for subjects other than English and mathematics do not currently have enough opportunities to monitor standards, progress and coverage in their different subjects. We identified opportunities for these leaders to be more involved in activities such as leading staff training, giving advice to colleagues and raising the profile of their subjects. Consequently, I asked you to give priority to this work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new approaches to the teaching of mathematics are secure, in order to increase the percentage of pupils attaining at the higher standard in national assessments at the end of key stage 2
- leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics are given more opportunities to be involved in key tasks such as monitoring and reporting on standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Rudman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss the school's priorities for development and the impact of actions taken since the previous inspection. I also met the leaders who have responsibility for English and mathematics. I met with five governors, including the chair. I spoke on the telephone to the 'Herts for learning' improvement partner. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information including the school's self-evaluation, governing body minutes of meetings, plans and records for the use of additional funding, and the school's assessment information. I checked the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. We undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I analysed information from Parent View, Ofsted's online system for collecting the

views of parents, including responses received by free text. I also analysed responses from pupils and staff giving their views of the school.