

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Elizabeth Lethbridge
Executive Academy Head
Diptford Parochial Church of England Primary School
Diptford
Totnes
Devon
TQ9 7NY

Dear Mrs Lethbridge

Short inspection of Diptford Parochial Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In recent years, the school has experienced significant turmoil and has seen a complete change of teaching staff since September 2016. Instability in staffing over that period has caused significant upheaval, particularly for pupils in the older years. The number of pupils enrolled at the school has fallen and standards in some aspects of the school's work have declined. The directors of the multi-academy trust have acted resolutely to improve standards, not least in deploying you as the executive academy head and in the recruitment of teachers. These actions are resulting in parents having greater confidence in the school and in pupils making stronger progress.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They show respect for one another and play well. One pupil described the best aspect of the school as the 'small, friendly community', and other pupils agreed. They comment positively on the changes they have seen recently, particularly the higher standards that are now expected of them. They find you and your staff to be kind and motivating. They particularly value the wide range of trips and events, including sporting competitions.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated leader for safeguarding, you have ensured that your own child protection training and that of your deputy are up to date. Staff are suitably well appraised of the risks that pupils may face. Staff are particularly vigilant to the indicators and follow these up sensitively.

Pupils have a reasonable understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly in and around the school, including the forest school. They have a good awareness of the risks that they may face when using computers or mobile devices. However, older pupils have very little understanding of the potential risks that they might face from those who hold extremist views.

Although the required checks are carried out on potential members of staff, these are not always completed before they take up employment. For several members of staff, the recording of these checks is not rigorous enough and some of the checks cannot be evidenced. The chief executive officer has already begun to rectify this.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked closely at the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The information on the school website appeared to be out of date. The number of pupils with SEND has been falling in recent years and is well below the proportion seen typically.
- Your newly appointed SEND coordinator has a good understanding of SEND and is taking advantage of the training available to her, which has strengthened her own knowledge. As a result, there is now accurate identification of pupils with SEND. Leaders have successfully ensured that pupils who have particular needs have been recognised by the local authority and so additional funding has been allocated to the school.
- For those with less significant needs, leaders actively engage specialists from within the multi-academy trust and externally. This helps leaders to determine strategies with teaching staff so that the teaching and care that pupils receive better meet pupils' needs. The plans for pupils with SEND are suitably detailed, are maintained well and reviewed regularly. This allows leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision.
- Increasingly, pupils with SEND are supported well in class by teachers and teaching assistants who plan learning and establish routines that allow pupils to make more rapid progress. Additional teaching sessions are effective in helping pupils to develop their confidence and their understanding of the topics they study. Consequently, pupils with SEND are making good progress.
- In mathematics, the pupils in key stage 2 whose ability was previously average did not achieve as well in the statutory assessments in 2018 as they have done historically. However, in key stage 1, standards have been rising, with almost all pupils reaching the expected standards and several working at the higher standard.
- Leaders had identified this decline and reviewed the teaching approach to mathematics in key stage 2. Additional resources have been bought, and they are slowly being introduced. In class, pupils are confident in their arithmetic calculations and use the inverse function to check their work. They make good use of apparatus to demonstrate their understanding to other pupils and teachers. Older pupils lack the confidence in mathematics that was seen in younger pupils. Consequently, they are still catching up but are making some

progress. However, for the most able mathematicians, the work is not challenging enough.

- Standards in writing fell significantly in 2017 and remained low in both key stages 1 and 2 in 2018. This is in stark contrast to the high standards that pupils reach in their reading. You have reviewed the school's approach to writing and made appropriate changes based on the positive experiences seen in other trust schools. Despite these changes, there is still variability in the confidence that teachers show in this aspect of their work. There is evidence that your support is beginning to have a positive impact on some year groups, although this is not as strongly evident for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- In key stage 1, pupils write using different types of sentences, including questions and statements. Many of the Year 2 pupils are successfully introducing quotes and show some sophistication in their writing. Pupils show good accuracy in their use of punctuation, including the use of capital letters, full stops, commas and question marks. Pupils generally use their strong phonics knowledge to spell correctly, but this is not always the case. The quality of the presentation of their work and their handwriting is beginning to show signs of improvement, although this is very recent.
- Writing by pupils in key stage 2 paints a mixed picture. In Year 4, pupils are making strong progress. They are writing with increasing complexity and at greater length. They make good language choices which create the desired effect and show an awareness of their intended audience. In poetry, pupils successfully write their own limericks, riddles and kennings. In Years 5 and 6, however, few pupils are working at the standard expected for their age. Too often, their inaccurate spelling detracts from their writing. They use some language features that enhance their work, such as subordinate and embedded clauses, but these are often at a simplistic level.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, particularly those in Years 5 and 6, make more rapid progress in their writing
- support given by leaders brings about tangible improvements rapidly for all year groups
- pre-employment checks are carried out in good time and record-keeping is fully and accurately maintained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of The Link multi-academy trust, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Exeter, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you joined me in observing learning in classes. We looked at the work of many pupils, and many more talked to me about their learning. Meetings were held with you, your senior teacher and the teacher responsible for pupils with SEND. I met with two members of the local hub board and spoke with the chair of the multi-academy trust board by telephone.

I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own analysis of strengths and weaknesses, assessment information, staff recruitment checks and records related to pupils' special educational needs and disabilities.

I considered the views of 18 parents who responded to Parent View, 11 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 24 pupils who completed the online pupil questionnaire. I also spoke with parents before the start of the school day and met with a group of eight pupils from Years 4 and 5.