

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Gavin Beetham  
Headteacher  
Thurlaston Church of England Primary School  
Desford Road  
Thurlaston  
Leicester  
Leicestershire  
LE9 7TE

Dear Mr Beetham,

### **Short inspection of Thurlaston Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 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. You have ensured that there is a positive culture by setting high expectations for staff and pupils to succeed. The values of justice, trust, friendship, perseverance, compassion and generosity are evident in the school and known well by pupils. Pupils are well cared for and they work hard. Several parents told me that the school has a 'family feel' to it, and one remarked, 'It is a lovely, welcoming school. My children are thriving here.'

Your plans for school improvement are effective. They focus on the correct priorities and set out clearly what actions are to be completed and by whom. There are opportunities for school leaders to monitor the impact of the actions at specific points throughout the year. We agreed that timescales for when actions are to be completed could be more precise.

Your self-evaluation of the school is honest and accurate. You have a good range of evidence to prove that the school remains at least 'good' in all areas. You therefore have a realistic view of the school's strengths and areas for development.

You have a dedicated and knowledgeable staff. They are committed to ensuring that pupils in their classes achieve well. They are passionate about their areas of extra responsibility. For example, the leader for special educational needs (SEN)

and/or disabilities has clear systems in place to ensure that any pupil who falls behind is identified quickly and given the help they need to catch up.

You are supported well by the effective governing body. Governors make frequent visits to the school in order to check on the progress of key improvement areas. Reports are then fed back to other governors at meetings. This ensures that governors are kept up to date with developments at the school.

Pupils are polite, respectful and enthusiastic learners. They told me that bullying is extremely rare and that behaviour is good, both in classes and on the playground. They enjoy the weekly 'gold award' assemblies when certificates are presented to pupils who have recently worked hard or consistently displayed the school's values. Pupils are looking forward to the upcoming residential to Wales and relish educational visits. A recent example is a trip to the National Space Centre. Pupils also visited the New Walk Museum in order to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Egyptians. Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities on offer to them. These include art, drama, gymnastics and various sports clubs. There are many opportunities for pupils to compete against other schools. For example, Thurlaston players are the current local bench ball champions.

You have plans to show how the extra pupil premium funding that the school receives is allocated. However, you do not have a clear enough view of the impact this extra funding has on those pupils who receive it, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils. Governors cannot, therefore, hold you fully to account for the progress these pupils make. We agreed that this should be a next step for the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. You have ensured that all staff have received appropriate safeguarding training and that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. You keep staff up to date with safeguarding issues through local authority updates and statutory documentation. The safeguarding governor completes an annual audit to report areas of strength and those that might require some improvement. You understand the importance of keeping safeguarding records securely and in good order.

There are effective systems in place to monitor pupils' attendance. You respond quickly should a pupil's attendance become a concern and remind parents frequently of the importance of regular school attendance. Consequently, rates of absence and persistent absence are below the national averages.

### **Inspection findings**

- Over recent years, standards of pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 have been high. However, there was a significant drop in the rates of progress made by pupils leaving the school last year in mathematics. You quickly identified the reasons for this, resulting in

whole-staff training in algebra. You have also asked teachers to increase the number of opportunities for pupils to practise problem solving and reasoning. I saw several good examples of this in the Year 3 and 4, class where pupils had successfully been solving problems using money and measurement. Teachers are ensuring that pupils are learning a wide variety of mathematical content including shape, area and fractions.

- You have developed an effective system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers use a variety of sources to arrive at their accurate judgements including work in pupils' books and standardised tests. There are opportunities for teachers to moderate pupils' work in writing and mathematics with other teachers from other schools. This helps to ensure that their assessment judgements are secure.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. Staff visit children in their pre-school settings and give opportunities for parents and children to visit the school in the summer term. As a result, staff have a good understanding of children's abilities before the children start at the school. Staff ensure that children are assessed frequently and accurately against the foundation stage curriculum. Consequently, the next steps in children's learning are planned for carefully. Children make good progress. The learning environments both inside and outside are stimulating and appropriate. There are opportunities for children to develop their writing, number and creative skills. During the inspection, children were thoroughly engaged in the activities and the topic of 'animals.' For example, a group of children were exploring a pile of leaves and using magnifying glasses looking for 'minibeasts', while another group of children were writing sentences about what they had seen. One boy wrote, 'I saw a butterfly fluttering by.'
- Pupils are exposed to a broad and balanced curriculum. Evidence seen in pupils' workbooks shows that subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. These include science, geography, history, art and religious education. Pupils have a good knowledge of faiths and places of worship different from their own. Teachers are assessing accurately the progress that pupils are making in these foundation subjects.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are unanimous in their view that their children are happy, safe and making good progress. Staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire echoed the parents' views.
- You have received good support from the 'Affinity' teaching school alliance. Staff and governors have received appropriate training. Your judgements on the quality of teaching have been validated.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- extra funding received by the school is allocated and monitored stringently in order to evaluate its impact accurately.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Stonier  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the four teachers and three members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a local authority school improvement adviser. I visited all classrooms with you and examined a range of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils informally during lessons and formally during an interview. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at the start of the school day and during lessons. I met with parents at the beginning of the school day.

I took into account 44 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. There were 40 responses to the pupil survey and nine to the staff survey. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records, the single central record, the latest achievement information for the school, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of meetings of the governing body and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.