

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Vanessa Wells
Headteacher
Orford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Orford
Woodbridge
Suffolk
IP12 2LU

Dear Mrs Wells

Short inspection of Orford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has restored and now maintains the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Following a long period of frequent changes in leadership, you took over the role of substantive headteacher in September 2016. You wasted no time in establishing your high expectations of staff and pupils alongside your compassion and care for every individual. One parent commented: 'The headteacher and her team have transformed the school and have made it a positive, inspiring place where children are challenged and encouraged to reach their full potential.'

You are recruiting and building a strong team of staff who are well trained and willingly share your vision and values for excellence. Staff are very proud to work in this small school. Together, you ensure that pupils make good progress from their individual starting points both academically and personally. Leaders, governors and staff know the school improvement priorities well and are working effectively to meet the aspirational plans you have set. Through your careful monitoring, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving and current pupils are making better progress as a result.

I was impressed that the many rich experiences identified at the previous inspection still remain the case. You make effective use of the teaching kitchen, where pupils of all ages learn lifelong culinary skills. They enjoy preparing meals either for their

friends to eat at school or to take home. During these additional lessons, pupils demonstrate how well they get along together, working well as small teams.

The school is a happy, calm and well-organised place in which to learn. Pupils are welcoming, polite and articulate. They told me with enthusiasm and pride how much they appreciate gardening and participating in the many sporting after-school clubs that are provided, such as fencing and hockey.

Children in Reception are happy and well cared for. Due to the very small cohorts of children, published results can vary greatly year on year. However, inspection evidence demonstrates that from their individual starting points children make good progress. They learn in a bright and well-resourced environment that is appropriate for children's individual needs. Staff keep the records of children's experiences and learning journeys meticulously. These records reflect the progress that each child makes and the many interesting activities they enjoy. You have rightly identified renovating the outdoor area as a priority in your improvement plans. You are working closely with the local authority to ensure that the best use is made of the early years space so that children can develop their skills further.

You are held to account well by dedicated and well-informed governors. They visit the school regularly to check the quality of well-being and achievement of pupils. The new chair of the governing body has brought additional educational expertise to the leadership of the school. Consequently, governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses. They are focused on improving the quality and consistency of education so that individual pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their school life.

Parents are highly complimentary about the work of the school. Many of them recognise the positive changes that have happened more recently and the improvements in the quality of teaching that are evident. From the parental comments received, nearly all expressed how well the school ensures that their children 'flourish', 'thrive' and 'are the happiest and most settled they have been'. One parent summed up the sentiments of many others: 'This is a great school with excellent leadership and teaching staff. All in all, a lovely environment and exactly how I want my children to spend their primary school years.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and the pupils' safety and well-being are at the heart of all you do. All staff who responded to their online questionnaire agree that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils, including most of those who responded to their questionnaire, agree that they could identify an adult with whom they would speak if they were concerned. Leaders have been successful in creating a secure and caring environment in which pupils and staff have confidence and feel valued.

Policies for safeguarding and child protection have been updated and are in line with the current guidance from the Department for Education. Staff have received good-quality safeguarding training from the local authority and you provide any additional information through staff meetings. Suitable recording systems are in place for the safe recruitment of staff.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive regarding how well staff look after their children and keep them safe at school. One parent commented: 'The teachers and other staff go above and beyond to ensure my child is safe and educated appropriately for his additional needs.'

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to consider how well pupils progress in mathematics. This was because in 2016 and 2017 the achievement of pupils in mathematics was lower than in reading and writing in both key stages.
- Raising the quality of teaching in mathematics was one of your first priorities when you took over the leadership of the school. Since then, the leader for mathematics has received training in different approaches to teaching the subject, which have been successfully shared with staff.
- From pupils' books, we saw that pupils experience sequences of well-planned activities that effectively build their mathematical skills and abilities over a period of time. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities can access the lesson at their individual level because they are provided with the same appropriately adapted learning opportunities. As a result, these pupils are making good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils in key stage 2 take pride in their work and their books reflect their perseverance and diligence when solving calculations that are more complex. One older pupil was able to demonstrate secure understanding and application of a method to solve a division calculation. The pupil confidently explained the process, used the chosen method adeptly and presented the work meticulously. This was equally the case in many pupils' books considered across key stage 2.
- Pupils have regular and additional opportunities to practise skills such as learning their times tables. In one lesson, pupils enthusiastically recited their nine times tables to music. They were highly successful. Equally, pupils are confident and using increasingly appropriate mathematical terms when explaining their thinking.
- With such small cohorts, secure comparisons year on year cannot always be made. From your accurate assessments and pupils' books, the evidence shows that pupils in key stage 1 are making better progress from their starting points. However, you recognise that currently pupils are not yet recording their work in line with your high expectations of presentation. They are not practising accurate number formation, and demonstrating their skills and understanding well enough, from an early age.
- Another area I considered was the progress that the most able pupils make. This was because in 2016 and 2017 no pupil reached the higher standard in reading,

writing and mathematics combined. In key stage 1, over two years, the number of pupils working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics has been minimal.

- In lower key stage 2, the most able pupils are currently making better progress, particularly in literacy. This is because they have frequent opportunities to write at length, edit and redraft their work. The most able pupils respond well to the targets they are set. Pupils' books demonstrate that they are using a wide range of suitable vocabulary to express their ideas, which illustrates that they are working at greater depth.
- Pupils often receive precise feedback to improve their skills in English. You recognise that this is not yet as consistent across all subjects and especially for the most able pupils. As a result, their progress is at times not as rapid as that of their peers. You have already identified that the most able pupils could be provided with even more opportunity to extend and practise their skills in a range of different ways so that they can fully demonstrate their capabilities. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- I also considered how well you ensure that pupils make good progress across the curriculum in the mixed-age classes. Pupils receive a varied and interesting curriculum that they very much appreciate. They speak highly of the range of trips that are planned to spark their interest and the many additional clubs that are provided.
- Pupils' achievement in science is improving. This year, pupils are experiencing more practical learning that develops their investigative skills. From the work in pupils' books, it is evident that pupils are making better progress as a result of the precise support and challenge they now receive.
- You recognise that pupils of all abilities do not have the same chance to excel in subjects such as history and geography as they do in English and mathematics, especially those who are most able. This year you have firm plans to improve this aspect of leadership so that pupils can make better progress.
- Finally, I considered how well leaders ensure that pupils attend school well. This was because the inspector in the previous inspection asked for this to be an area for you to improve. From the published information, attendance in 2015 and 2016 did not rise.
- Given the small numbers, individual pupils can make a significant impact on the whole attendance of the school. As an inclusive school, you and governors work well with parents, supporting and challenging where required to ensure that all pupils access education on a full-time basis. As a result, you have many examples where pupils now attend school more regularly than before. Parents are highly supportive of the work you do to support families.
- Attendance is in now line with the national average and celebrated weekly through assembly. Leaders and governors promote good attendance at school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils are provided with further opportunities to explore and use their skills in mathematics so that more reach greater depth in their learning at the end of both key stages
- pupils make good and sustained progress in all subjects across the curriculum from their individual starting points so that more excel
- they improve the outdoor provision for the children in the early years so that they have more opportunity to develop their physical skills and take risks.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- At the start of the inspection, we discussed the key lines of enquiry, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning.
- Documents such as the school's evaluation of its own performance, improvement planning and the governors' handbook were evaluated.
- You and I observed pupils' learning in all classes over the course of the inspection. We looked at samples of pupils' work in each class to evaluate the progress pupils make over time. We observed the teaching of phonics in class 1.
- I spoke informally with pupils during lessons and lunchtime regarding their learning.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. Discussions were held with the safeguarding leader.
- I met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- The views of 22 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, six staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 30 pupils who completed the online pupil questionnaire, were taken into account.