

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231

www.gov.uk/ofsted



4 October 2019

Ms Saira Sawtell
St Osmund's Church of England Middle School
Barnes Way
Dorchester
Dorset
D1 2DZ

Dear Ms Sawtell

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Osmund's Church of England Middle School

Following my visit with Gary Lewis, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 17–18 September 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 2018.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers in the English and mathematics departments.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Salisbury, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2018.

- Improve the quality of governance so that:
 - precise and realistic evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school takes place
 - appropriate strategic planning is in place and monitored effectively so the necessary improvements can be made rapidly
 - leaders are held to account when expectations are too low, and pupils fail to achieve well
 - the pupil premium is used effectively to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance and academic and personal development
 - the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium is monitored and used effectively to ensure that pupils who are below age-related expectations in literacy and mathematics improve speedily.
- Improve the quality of leadership so that:
 - the monitoring of teaching leads to sustained improvements in its quality
 - middle leaders are trained in how to monitor, challenge and support colleagues, so teaching is consistently effective
 - high expectations are the norm and pupils display good behaviour, pride in their work and purposeful attitudes to learning consistently.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that:
 - learning is planned well to meet the needs of pupils, regardless of their ability
 - pupils' work is assessed effectively so that learning builds on prior attainment and pupils know how to improve.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 17–18 September 2019

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Wessex Multi Academy Trust. An inspector spoke on the telephone with the school improvement officer for the Diocese of Salisbury. Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils and spoke to pupils, informally, when observing the school's work. Inspectors listened to two groups of pupils read. Inspectors conducted joint lesson observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and looked at the work in pupils' books. An inspector evaluated the school's action plan.

Context

Since the previous inspection, an assistant headteacher, responsible for behaviour and welfare, has been appointed. Drama has been added to the school curriculum and a specialist drama teacher was appointed in September 2019. A learning mentor was appointed in September 2019 to support disadvantaged pupils. Two co-chairs of the governing body have been replaced by one chair of the governing body. The school is due to join the Wessex Multi Academy Trust on 1 November 2019.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have worked hard to revise the curriculum for both English and mathematics. The curriculum leader for English has raised the profile of reading throughout all year groups. Pupils have begun to read high-quality texts to develop their understanding of how authors use language to structure their ideas.

Leaders have designed the curriculum well to develop pupils' skills and understanding in writing and reading. Pupils draw on their reading to inform the ways in which they craft their writing for a breadth of purposes. For example, Year 6 pupils used the language features contained in a magazine article when writing about how to become a successful diver. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy reading and that they have many opportunities to do so at school. Pupils also told inspectors that they enjoy listening to their teacher read from a novel at the end of the day. Year 8 pupils particularly enjoy listening to the novel 'Noughts and Crosses' by Malorie Blackman. However, pupils do not consistently have opportunities to explore their interpretations and deepen their understanding by applying new knowledge.

Leaders have reviewed the mathematics curriculum to ensure that pupils develop a fluent and progressively more complex understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils have responded well to the new curriculum and to teachers' innovative approaches. Pupils are now more engaged when exploring their own methods for

solving mathematical problems. Pupils discuss their interpretations and evaluate each other's responses well.

Many subjects are developing a better sequenced curriculum that supports pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which has informed the broad, creative and challenging curriculum in place at the school. For example, pupils in Year 5 were observed studying notation in preparation for playing Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy'. Teachers' planning usually builds upon pupils' prior knowledge and extends their understanding. However, in some subject areas, teachers deliver challenging curriculum content without providing pupils with sufficient opportunity to evaluate and secure what they have already learned.

Senior leaders, curriculum leaders and teachers check pupils' understanding regularly to identify whether additional support is required. Pupils' misunderstandings are usually remedied quickly, and pupils know how to improve their work. However, in some subjects, curriculum leaders and teachers have not planned effectively to check pupils' understanding of new ideas, which hampers their progress.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support so that they can access the curriculum with success and confidence. Leaders and staff have established tailored approaches designed to meet pupils' emotional, social and learning needs. For example, a small group of Year 7 pupils were observed using their knowledge of sounds and letters to identify spelling patterns. Similarly, leaders have raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils across the curriculum. Every department reviews the progress of such pupils to ensure that they receive additional support if required.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have demonstrated commitment, vision and ambition in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Staff share leaders' vision for the future of the school and wholeheartedly welcome the opportunities to improve the quality of education for pupils. Leaders have established high expectations for pupils across the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong across all year groups. Lesson visits, discussions with pupils and reviews of pupils' work demonstrate that pupils enjoy learning and are eager to do well. The relationships that exist between staff and pupils are positive and supportive.

The school's action plan focuses pertinently on the areas for improvement identified in the November 2018 inspection report. Leaders, including governors, evaluate the school's progress regularly against this action plan. The action plan has a clear strategic overview, supported by appropriate timelines, responsibilities and success

measures. However, senior leaders and governors acknowledge the need to embed recently established teaching, learning and assessment strategies so that the impact on pupils' achievements is sustained.

Leaders have ensured that staff receive additional, ongoing training in areas pertinent to the school's improvement priorities. Teachers were observed to employ a breadth of strategies, drawn from whole-school training, to strengthen pupils' understanding. A whole-school approach has resulted in the high-quality presentation of work in every subject. Pupils' pride in their work is evident in the care with which they present it.

Senior leaders and curriculum leaders have reviewed the curriculum and adapted it so that pupils develop knowledge and understanding about a breadth of subjects. Leaders have also prioritised the development of pupils' understanding of how they learn. However, leaders recognise that it is too early to judge the impact of the changes to teaching and learning and the curriculum.

Senior leaders have revised the structure of leadership at the school to create clearer lines of responsibility and accountability. Leaders monitor and review the quality of the curriculum and teaching, learning and assessment effectively. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders have provided additional support and training for curriculum leaders to enable them to monitor the quality of their subjects more effectively.

A review of governance was conducted, and governors have acted on the recommendations. Governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of education at the school through visits to the school, discussions with senior leaders and involvement in leaders' evaluations of the school's action plan. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact this has had on disadvantaged pupils' achievements.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding was carried out after the last inspection. It identified what is working well and what needs to improve. As a result, leaders use this funding more effectively. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved, as have their achievements by the end of key stage 2. However, leaders acknowledge that the achievements of disadvantaged pupils are still below those that are typical nationally and need to improve.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have communicated their vision for the academic and social success of all pupils to staff and pupils well.
- Leaders have established a school-wide approach to developing the curriculum.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have not fully addressed weaknesses in the quality of teaching in some subjects.

External support

The Wessex Multi Academy Trust has provided ongoing support for school leaders and governors. The chief executive of the trust has participated in meetings to evaluate the progress of improvements against the action plan. Curriculum leaders for English and mathematics have developed their understanding of how to monitor the quality of education in their respective departments through the trust's leadership training. The school improvement officer for the Diocese of Salisbury has conducted a review of the effectiveness of the school. The recommendations were acted on by the headteacher.