

12 March 2018

Sue Runciman
Headteacher
Shinfield St Mary's CofE Junior School
Chestnut Crescent
Shinfield
Reading
Berkshire
RG2 9EJ

Dear Mrs Runciman

Short inspection of Shinfield St Mary's CofE Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 December 2013.

The school continues to be good.

You and other leaders and governors have maintained a good quality of education during a period of substantial change for the school. Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded in size to become a three-form-entry junior school. This has entailed school leaders overseeing a considerable building programme, recruiting new staff and developing new systems to accommodate the needs of an expanding school. This has also been achieved against the background of significant changes to the leadership team, including the appointment of a new headteacher in November 2014.

Since joining the school you have introduced a common set of values, including inclusion, diversity, honesty and enjoyment, that parents, staff and pupils know and understand. One parent reflected the views of many through her written comment, 'It is a fantastic school with a brilliant headteacher. We are well informed about school life and our son is happy to go to school. We can see him growing with the values that we cherish and with great respect to the teachers, the learning and the school.' Your undoubted passion for making sure that each and every pupil, regardless of background, achieves to the best of his or her abilities and talents underpins all aspects of the school's work. You, your staff and governors strive to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities within an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere.

You have restructured the leadership team to make the best use of the skills and expertise of staff. Consequently there is a shared understanding of what the school

is trying to achieve. There is a sense of purpose among staff, generated to a large extent by the way in which teams work together to improve their skills. Teachers, in groups of three or four, observe each other in classrooms to share their different strengths, and this has created a consistent approach to the quality of teaching. As a result of a thorough evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, you have provided training for all staff to help them to improve specific aspects of their practice. Within the school there is a strong culture and ethos of improvement owing to your high expectations of staff and pupils alike.

Pupils are happy and they enjoy school. A large number of parents who expressed their views in writing commented on the community and village ethos of the school. One parent wrote, 'We are really happy with Shinfield St Mary's. Even though the school has grown a lot during the last six years, it still has the village school atmosphere where everyone knows each other and older pupils look after younger ones.' Pupils themselves say that adults are caring and they always take their concerns seriously. They enjoy learning because teachers make learning fun. Pupils say that they study a wide range of subjects that capture their interest and develop their talents. They particularly appreciate the various sporting activities available to them. Pupils behave well in class and when moving around the school. They are polite, friendly and helpful and show excellent manners and highly positive attitudes to learning.

The school has continued to improve year on year under your leadership. In the national tests in 2017, pupils in Year 6 made progress that was significantly above average in reading and mathematics to reach standards that were above the national average. You have ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently strong across all year groups so that pupils progress well in all aspects of their learning. However, you know that in some year groups, pupils could progress even further in their writing and you are taking steps to address this. You have responded to the issues from the previous inspection by ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently strong across the school. However, you agree that the most able pupils are not always moved on quickly enough when they have shown that they can do the work. You have broadened the opportunities for pupils to use their information technology skills in their day-to-day learning. Nevertheless, you know that there is further scope to develop this aspect of the school.

Safeguarding is effective

Leaders and governors are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe at school. You make sure that all visitors to school are carefully checked and that all staff have received the appropriate checks before they start work in school. You attend regular training to keep up to date with all new requirements. Staff and governors are trained effectively to keep pupils safe. You provide frequent updates and ensure that safeguarding is always on the agenda at staff meetings and at governors' meetings. All staff understand their responsibility to report any concerns, no matter how small, so that you can keep track of any emerging issues. You have built very positive working relationships with external agencies so that you can access the right support for vulnerable pupils in a timely way. The systems you have in place to

record any safeguarding concerns are meticulously detailed.

Pupils feel safe in school and they know how to keep themselves safe. They have a very clear understanding of the need to stay safe when using modern technology. They explained that they should not give out any personal information when using computers, tablets or other mobile devices. They know it is unkind to make negative comments about other people and they said that they would tell an adult should they see anything that made them uncomfortable. Pupils understood about different types of bullying but were adamant that it does not occur. They reported a few minor disagreements but were confident that adults quickly intervene should a problem arise.

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils we agreed to focus especially on:
 - the effectiveness of actions taken by school leaders to improve pupils' progress in writing
 - the extent to which leaders have maintained a high quality of education during the expansion of the school and the extent to which issues for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed
 - actions taken by leaders to maintain the high standards in mathematics.
- In recent years, pupils have not made as much progress in writing as they have in reading and mathematics. The subject leader for English has carried out a thorough evaluation and has identified some specific weaknesses that have held pupils back. As a consequence of this work, she has put into place actions to improve the quality of teaching writing. There is now an expectation among all staff that pupils will use their writing skills in other subjects to the same high standard that they show in English lessons. This gives pupils more opportunities to practise and reinforce their spelling, punctuation and grammar in all lessons.
- The English subject leader has strengthened the relationship between reading and writing by introducing a range of stimulating books that teachers use to help pupils to improve their own work. In classrooms, pupils study texts so that they see for themselves good models of written English, and this sharpens their own writing. In all classrooms pupils frequently share and discuss their ideas and this motivates them to write. As a result of these actions, work in pupils' books shows that across the school, pupils make good progress in writing. They write fluently, confidently and with enjoyment in their English lessons and when learning other subjects.
- Despite considerable change over the past few years, leaders and governors have maintained and improved the quality of education. They ensured that communications, particularly during the building works, were good so that everyone was well informed of the scale of the project. They recruited high-quality staff with the necessary skills and experience. School leaders and governors worked closely as a team to devise and implement systems to ensure the smooth running of the school with an increased population. The processes

you put into place ensured that the school has made a seamless transition as the school has expanded in size.

- You and your governors have successfully addressed the issues for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently strong across the school because actions taken by school leaders have brought about improvements. One of the strengths of teaching is the way in which teachers use pupils' misconceptions to adapt their teaching. Teachers have a secure grasp of pupils' learning needs and so provide activities that challenge and motivate them. Just occasionally the most able pupils are not challenged because they are provided with work that they can already do.
- You have invested funds to provide resources and equipment in information and communication technology (ICT) and have provided training to staff to help them make best use of ICT in their lessons. While there is evidence that pupils use ICT to carry out and record their work, this is an aspect of the school's work that could be further developed. During the inspection there was no evidence of ICT being used in classrooms or the ICT suite.
- One of the strengths of the school is the provision and outcomes for pupils in mathematics. Standards and progress have been consistently above average for several years. During our learning walk we observed pupils thoroughly enjoying challenging activities that made them work hard. Teachers are skilled at asking pupils questions that ask them to explain their thinking and demonstrate how they arrived at their answers. Pupils readily share and discuss their work and this helps them to develop their ideas and progress well in their understanding of mathematical concepts. Work in pupils' books showed that they complete a lot of work to a high standard. Pupils apply their knowledge of number to solve complex word problems, showing that they understand what they are doing and gaining a real mastery of mathematics.
- The mathematics subject leader has reorganised the way in which mathematics is taught so that pupils of all abilities have equal opportunities to succeed. She checks the quality of teaching and she looks at work in pupils' books to ensure that they are progressing well. The mathematics subject leader has a clear understanding of assessment information and so she tracks this carefully and will put extra help in place to support those pupils at risk of falling behind. The leader has also introduced an electronic programme so that pupils can practise their mathematics at home. She has a clear view of the strengths of mathematics and knows that some of the most able pupils can be even further challenged.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a high enough level of challenge for those pupils who are capable of moving on more quickly with their learning
- there are more opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the whole curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Diocese of Oxford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wokingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited classrooms with you across the school to observe pupils working in both English and mathematics lessons. I spoke to pupils and looked at work in their books. I held meetings with school leaders and two members of the governing body. I also spoke with the local authority adviser on the telephone. I took into account the 42 responses to the online survey, Parent View, including the free-text comments. I looked at a range of documents, including the school development plan, minutes from governors' meetings and your own evaluation of the school's performance. I looked at the school's single central record of the checks made on staff and visitors and I looked at other documents relating to pupils' safeguarding.