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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Clare South
Headteacher
Long Marston VA Church of England Primary School
Station Road
Long Marston
Tring
Hertfordshire
HP23 4QS

Dear Mrs South

Short inspection of Long Marston VA Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy attending Long Marston Primary School and attend regularly. They enjoy learning, and relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. Pupils feel safe and secure in school because adults listen to them and help them if needed. Parents are very complimentary about the school. The following comment sums up the views of many parents: 'A delightful school with a wonderful headteacher and staff. A happy place for children to grow and learn.'

The continued success of the school is testament to your clear, decisive leadership and desire to ensure that all pupils leave the school well prepared for life. Staff work together as a team because of your commitment to team working. Staff are proud to be members of the school and share your high expectations and aspirations for the pupils. Governors are committed to making sure the school continues to improve. They are a knowledgeable, well-trained group who provide effective challenge and support to yourself and the leadership team.

You have successfully addressed the areas from the last inspection. Teachers plan work that builds upon pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils work through a range of challenging activities and the most able pupils are quickly moved to the more challenging activities.

Outcomes in the early years are good and the number of children who leave Reception having achieved a good level of development has improved since the previous inspection. It is now consistently above average. This is because staff provide work that is well matched to the needs of the children and challenges their thinking. Children learn in a stimulating environment and quickly establish good attitudes to learning and working cooperatively.

Your leadership team's evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. The actions identified in the school improvement plan are appropriately focused on the right priorities. This is because you and the leadership team effectively evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve provision for pupils.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They work well together in lessons and older pupils support the younger ones. Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful towards one another and adults. All the pupils I spoke to said behaviour in school is good and that pupils are friendly towards one another. Pupils who joined the school mid-year told me how helpful their peers had been in helping them to settle into school life.

You and your staff provide a good range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended by pupils. The curriculum is also enhanced by a range of trips and visits that help to deepen pupils' learning or develop their independence and ability to work together, for example, a sleepover in the local church. Parents appreciate the variety of activities and visits summed up by the following comments, 'good extra-curricular activities due to the dedication of the staff', 'Children have lots of exciting activities in school and on trips' and 'Children love the clubs available.'

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported effectively through the curriculum. Pupils study a range of cultures and religions and each key stage takes part in a drama production. Older pupils have the opportunity to discuss moral dilemmas and issues in their religious studies lessons.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The pre-employment checks carried out on staff and volunteers meet government requirements.

You have ensured that the school has more than one person who is able to fulfil the role of safeguarding lead if you are absent. You are all trained at an appropriate level. A careful check is kept on when staff need to update their safeguarding training. All staff go through an annual refresher course and are kept up to date on any changes throughout the year.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations as part of their personal, social and health education lessons. Through the school website,

newsletter, assemblies and parental workshops, parents and pupils are provided with the latest guidance on the possible dangers of using technology.

Staff know the pupils extremely well and, therefore, quickly identify any changes in behaviour that may suggest a pupil's well-being is a cause for concern. Parents unanimously agree that pupils are well looked after in the school and that bullying, should it happen, is dealt with effectively. The following parent comment sums up the views of others: 'a school that really cares for the needs of its pupils'.

Inspection findings

- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 is strong. In 2017, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected standard and higher standard in reading and writing was well above average. I wanted to find out if the attainment of current pupils remains above average.
- I found that standards in reading remain good. Pupils get off to a good start in reading because of the exceptionally good quality of phonics teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they make sure that pupils correctly pronounce the letter sounds and blend them together to read and spell words.
- Work in pupils' books shows good letter formation and most pupils are using full stops, capital letters and simple connectives in their writing. Pupils are able to plan their stories and the most able pupils are writing at length.
- My next line of enquiry was to find out what leaders are doing to improve the progress of pupils in key stage 2. I chose this because while the attainment of pupils was above average in reading, writing and mathematics, progress in each subject was average. Progress in mathematics was weaker than reading and writing.
- Leaders are regularly checking the progress of pupils and you are quick to provide well-targeted support. This support is tailored to meet the needs of the individual so pupils quickly catch up. Lessons are planned to build upon pupils' previous learning and teachers provide pupils with appropriate levels of challenge. I saw some good examples of pupils being set challenges that extend their learning. The school's own information indicates that progress is improving and pupils' work confirms this. It shows that a greater proportion of pupils are now making better than expected progress.
- At the previous inspection, you were asked to provide more opportunities for pupils to solve problems in mathematics. I wanted to see how successfully you had achieved this and whether it was having an impact on improving attainment in mathematics. The work in pupils' books indicates that pupils in all year groups are given a range of problem-solving activities to develop their reasoning skills. Teachers check pupils' work, quickly pick up errors in their work and provide clear advice on how pupils can improve their work.
- Progress in mathematics is improving and pupils are more confident in attempting unfamiliar mathematical problems. However, unlike English, pupils are not provided with the opportunity to use their mathematical knowledge and skills

in other curriculum subjects. As a result, they do not understand how to apply mathematics in other contexts.

- Finally, I wanted to look at the quality of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics. I found that pupils are following a broad curriculum. Pupils are making good progress in science and results at the end of key stages 1 and 2 were above average in 2017. This is because pupils are given the opportunity to develop their understanding through scientific investigations which challenge their thinking. Pupils in class 4 were very excited because they had built an electric circuit that lit the light bulb or made the buzzer sound.
- In French lessons, pupils have plenty of opportunities to speak in the language and they are expected to do so. In physical education, pupils are developing a good level of subject skills which they use well in sports lessons.
- Homework activities related to topics provide pupils with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge as tasks are open ended. However, the work in pupils' books indicates that classwork is often reliant on worksheets which are not always providing the opportunity for pupils to develop subject-specific skills and knowledge or to extend their answers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have more opportunities to use their mathematical skills and knowledge across the curriculum
- topic work is sufficiently challenging to enable pupils to deepen their subject-specific knowledge and develop the required skills across a range of subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pardy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and five members of the governing body. I spoke with pupils during lunchtime to find out their views of the school. I examined a number of documents including the school's development plan, leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, documents relating to safeguarding and attendance and the local authority view of the school's performance. You accompanied me on a number of visits to lessons to judge pupils' attitudes to

learning and progress in lessons. We also looked at a number of books to look at progress over time in English, mathematics, science and topic.

We took account of Ofsted's online questionnaires from 47 pupils, 21 members of staff and 63 parents, including 30 free-text responses from parents.