

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Emma Morgan  
Head of School  
Corfe Castle Church of England Primary School  
East Street  
Corfe Castle  
Wareham  
Dorset  
BH20 5EE

Dear Mrs Morgan

### **Short inspection of Corfe Castle Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2011.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

In 2013, the school extended its age range to become a full primary school. Just prior to your appointment in September 2015, the school had become an academy and joined the Saturn Education Trust. Recently the school's popularity has grown and pupil numbers are continuing to rise. Parents and carers value the warm, encouraging ethos of the school and your purposeful leadership. As one parent commented, reflecting the high regard in which you are held, 'We are lucky to have Mrs Morgan.'

Pupils can explain the importance of respect and responsibility for others, which the school holds at the heart of its values. They enjoy their learning. Older pupils say that they relish the challenges teachers set for them. When expectations are high, pupils respond well in lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic about the wide range of visits and wider opportunities planned to fire their interest in learning.

You work closely with your team of specialist middle leaders to secure the continued development of the school. For example, you have improved the progress pupils make in reading across key stage 2. The teaching of phonics is now good and most pupils in Year 1 are demonstrating levels of understanding in line with those

expected for their age. There are, however, still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and not all new initiatives, for example the development of writing, are equally effective across the school. Your current evaluation of the school's work does not fully reflect where improvements to teaching still need to be made. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's priorities and regularly track how well the school improvement plan is being implemented. They recognise that targets set for pupils' achievement are ambitious. Without a more precise picture of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, they cannot form a reliable picture of whether targets are likely to be achieved.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have developed a strong and effective culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular, good-quality training. They are knowledgeable about their responsibilities, are vigilant and confident to report if they have a concern that a pupil may be at risk. There are regular opportunities for parents to meet and seek advice from the school's pastoral care officer, and parents and pupils speak highly of her support. Leaders keep detailed and high-quality records of actions which have been taken to refer concerns to other agencies or to provide direct support to families. The school administrator ensures that all checks on staff, volunteers and visitors are made to support the safety of the school and its pupils.

Pupils say they are taught how to stay safe, including when using the internet. They feel safe in school and are confident to seek help if they have fallen out with other pupils. They trust their teachers because, as one pupil said, reflecting the views of others, 'Teachers here have a friendly smile.' Parents spoken to, and almost all those who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that any problems are solved quickly and sensitively. A small minority of parents felt that poor behaviour by a few pupils is not dealt with effectively. This view was not shared by staff or pupils. During the inspection, skilled teaching assistants were seen to provide strong support for those pupils whose special educational needs (SEN) and/or disability mean that they need more support with their behaviour.

### **Inspection findings**

- I first looked at the effectiveness of leadership in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The school's current self-evaluation document shows that you identified that key stage 1 pupils did not make sufficiently steady progress during the autumn term. We carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in writing in key stage 1. This showed that while pupils are making progress, teaching was not helping pupils catch up as quickly as leaders believed. Equally, although teachers have responded positively to changes in the teaching of mathematics, the programme is not yet fully embedded.
- The middle leaders for mathematics and English are subject specialists and have full-time class teaching roles. You and they have improved teaching and assessment in these subjects. However, your checks of how effectively teaching is quickening pupils' progress are not of sufficient depth. Consequently, as a team you do not have a sharp enough picture of the quality of teaching and

learning needed to target improvement successfully.

- You make good use of opportunities to work with leaders and teachers across and beyond the trust. The trust supports the school by seeking sources of external expertise to assist subject leaders in developing teaching. However, the leadership of the trust is undergoing changes which are constraining its capacity to drive school improvement. Consequently, the major responsibility for school management and improvement lies solely with you as head of school. Currently, your responsibilities are too wide for you to quickly bring about the improvements you know need to be made.
- I next reviewed leaders' and teachers' efforts to improve the teaching of mathematics after two years of weaker progress across key stage 2. Teachers and pupils are positive about the change of approach to teaching mathematics. Lessons in mathematics now proceed at a brisk pace. For example, Year 3 pupils were seen quickly working through the calculations to convert measurements of length. They were eager to move on to the challenge of solving problems. The teacher was vigilant in ensuring that if pupils needed more help, explanations were repeated, and more support given.
- Pupils' workbooks show that they are making good progress in arithmetic and problem solving. However, although teachers discuss pupils' mathematical thinking with them in lessons, there are limited opportunities for pupils to explore and express their reasoning in an age-appropriate and logical manner. This limits the ability of the most able pupils to deepen their learning.
- My next line of enquiry was to examine pupils' progress in writing in key stage 1. Past inconsistencies in assessing children's skills in the early years have led to pupils entering key stage 1 with a lower standard of writing than assessments would indicate. Some pupils in Year 1 still lack the skill of writing a simple sentence with accurately formed letters. Equally, across the key stage not all pupils who have mastered the basics of writing are making strong progress in deepening their composition skills.
- Teachers promote pupils' interest in writing well through story, talk and drama. However, pupils' work in books does not show that all lower-ability pupils are making the rapid progress necessary to overcome their underdeveloped basic skills. Also, pupils who have the capacity to reach the expected or higher standard are not being given the opportunity to practise and broaden their writing skills sufficiently for them to do so. You are implementing new strategies for hastening pupils' progress in writing, but there is more work to do here.
- I reviewed procedures for assessing children's achievements during their time in the early years class because there were concerns about the consistency of last year's assessments. The new class teacher is liaising closely with the pre-school leader to develop a coherent approach to tracking children's progress across early years. Her careful assessments are supporting children in the Reception Year to make good progress.
- Pupils' attendance has been below the national average for three years. Leaders and governors are tackling this robustly. Currently, there is a 1% increase in attendance compared with this point last year, because of actions you have taken. However, some parents keep their children away from school for extended

periods with little good reason. You are rightly increasing the challenge to parents to bring their children to school more frequently. In addition, you are celebrating good and improved attendance with pupils and their parents.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning fully supports leaders at all levels in swiftly bringing about improvements where they are needed
- improve the teaching of writing in key stage 1 so that it securely accelerates the progress of the least able pupils and extends opportunities for the most able pupils to write for a broad range of purposes, so that all can achieve their potential
- strengthen pupils' mathematical reasoning skills so that a greater proportion reach the higher standards
- continue to enlist the full support of parents in improving pupils' attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees of the multi-academy trust and the chief executive officer, 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

Wendy Marriott  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I visited all classes with you and together we looked at a range of pupils' work. I reviewed the assessment information held by the school, the school's self-evaluation and its current school improvement plan. I met with the chair of the trustees of the academy trust, the chair of the local governing board and one more governor. Over the day, I spoke to pupils in the playground and to a group of pupils who talked about their experience of the school. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and held a short meeting requested by a parent. I took account of the 30 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 30 comments that parents made. I reviewed the ten responses to the staff questionnaire. I checked the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including discussing safeguarding procedures with several members of staff. I checked on pupils' attendance to date and reviewed the school's analysis of pupils' absence.