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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Marion Harvey
Headteacher
Rushall Church of England Voluntary Aided School
Rushall
Pewsey
Wiltshire
SN9 6EN

Dear Mrs Harvey

Short inspection of Rushall Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The majority of the current teaching staff have been appointed since the previous inspection. Despite this, you have successfully developed a strong and talented group of school leaders and teachers. Under your management, they have improved the school significantly. They respond skilfully to the challenges presented by the number of pupils joining and leaving the school other than at normal times, which is higher than in most schools. They support the significant number of pupils from service families who have attended many schools and may have gaps in their learning. Teachers carefully build pupils' self-esteem and confidence to learn. In doing so, they ensure that pupils are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education.

Under your leadership, Rushall Primary School continues to flourish. Pupils from service families find stability, high-quality care and success during the typically short time that many are with you. You have created a strong family culture which welcomes all newcomers and places a high value on pupils' learning. Pupils, teachers, parents and governors are proud to be part of the school community. You and your team of teachers work together with determination to provide the best possible welfare and learning environment. You continually strive to make further improvements.

You have addressed the areas highlighted for improvement at the previous inspection successfully. For example, the well-planned teaching of phonics has

resulted in a strong reading culture, especially for pupils who have had a previously interrupted education. Pupils' confidence is evident in the quality and presentation of their writing and this has resulted in strong improvement in standards. We agreed that although you have addressed the issue of pupils' mathematical skills there is now a need to set higher challenges to raise standards further.

You, your governors and teachers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas that need to develop further. You use a robust system to assess what pupils know and can do when they join the school, which enables you to track and demonstrate the good progress they make. You understand the need to engage with parents in supporting their children, especially in reading. However, as we discussed, the new electronic data management system needs to be adapted to fit your particular school's needs, given the high level of mobility.

The governing body provides high-quality support and rigorously challenges school leaders. Performance management targets are used well to judge your success and set priorities for school development. Governors carry out their own robust monitoring and share their findings regularly at governing body meetings. In doing so, they verify the comprehensive information that you give them. Governors are regularly on hand to offer support and advice for school leaders, making good use of their wide range of skills and knowledge.

Your leaders work very effectively with external agencies, such as military welfare services and the local authority. You place a high value on working in partnership with other schools as part of the local cluster. In doing so, your teachers are able to keep up to date with curriculum development and new assessment practice.

Safeguarding is effective

A strong culture of safeguarding exists, with a shared understanding of the need to be vigilant in protecting pupils against all possible risks. The policies and procedures that inform day-to-day practice are robust and up to date. Staff are knowledgeable about pupils and their families and routinely keep leaders informed about any concerns. Referrals are kept securely and logs are comprehensively detailed and ordered, enabling staff to follow up issues in a timely and effective way. The governing body has oversight of safeguarding and its members monitor the effectiveness of policy and practice rigorously. Governors and staff are trained in safer recruitment and there are plans to extend this training to more of them. Statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Pupils report that they feel safe. They feel happy and comfortable in school because they are well supported. As one pupil I spoke to said, 'The teachers really care about you'. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and say that bullying is rare. Themes in the curriculum, such as e-safety, are often repeated during the year to make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Younger members of the school are well cared for by staff and their older peers, through a 'buddy system'. This kind and caring behaviour supports the school's core Christian ethos.

Inspection findings

- A key line of enquiry for this inspection was about the achievement of your middle-attaining pupils in mathematics. Following the results in 2016, you analysed your mathematics results and took swift action to improve standards. You have introduced effective opportunities across the school so that pupils are able to increase their fluency in mental arithmetic. Pupils are then able to apply this to their mathematics learning. Pupils understand what they need to do to improve their learning further. One pupil noted, 'I am doing well on most of the sums but I need practice on percentages'.
- The impact of the school's work to improve mathematics is effective. The differences in outcomes between boys and girls in mathematics have been eradicated. Plenty of opportunities are now available for pupils to reason, solve problems and explain their thinking. Older pupils show a real sense of maturity in the way they explain their working out and apply their mathematical understanding across a wide range of subjects. Good teaching in mathematics leads to pupils making strong, or even better, progress. Not satisfied with this, you have taken swift action to introduce higher levels of challenge to stretch pupils' thinking. This approach has strengthened pupils' skills in reasoning and deepened their understanding of mathematical concepts. However, as we agreed, there is room to challenge the middle- and higher-attaining pupils further to achieve even higher standards.
- My second line of enquiry was about phonics and its effect on reading in the school. Pupils' scores in the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved since the previous inspection although they were still below national figures last year. Your clear leadership of reading and phonics has led to improvements in reading this year. For example, alongside their home-reading book, pupils complete written tasks that demonstrate their comprehension. Phonics learning tasks are matched closely to the pupils' needs, which are identified through daily assessment. Each pupil is tracked individually in every aspect and phase of phonics.
- Year 3 pupils receive reinforcement sessions to enable them to improve their reading standards. These support sessions are monitored closely to ensure that the pupils involved are making progress. Younger pupils in the early years quickly develop their early reading skills and older pupils are making sure that they apply their spelling knowledge to their writing. Across the school, the focus on celebrating reading for pleasure has been strengthened. This is a school where books, reading and stories are used well across subjects. Pupils want to read. The school's information shows early signs of strong improvement in pupils' reading skills.
- We agreed that attendance was a line of enquiry, as during the last academic year a significant proportion of those pupils who were entitled to free school meals, or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, did not attend school regularly enough. Your detailed records of individual attendance patterns show that those pupils who were persistently absent last year experienced complex medical and social issues requiring specialist interventions. Pupils were well

supported through close liaison between their parents, your teachers and external agencies. Your actions and the support you give families has led to improved attendance of these groups of pupils.

- The final line of enquiry we agreed related to the lack of compliance of the school's website. The school does not meet requirements to publish specified information on the curriculum and a number of other items, especially dates on policies and the school's most recent key stage 2 results. You and the governors admitted that this was an oversight and the process was hindered by technical problems. You all recognise that the website is your 'window on the world' that gives people an opportunity to see how good a school you are. You agreed that the website should be made compliant as a matter of urgency.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able and middle-attaining pupils in all key stages are challenged further to reach higher standards in mathematics
- the system used to collect information on pupils' attainment is adapted for your particular school's needs, to accurately and easily evaluate pupils' progress
- statutory duties are met to publish all the required information on the school's website.

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 Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Terry Mortimer
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and members of staff. The inspection also involved a meeting with the vice-chair of governors and four other governors. I had a telephone conversation with the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. There were nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and parents' views were sought when they brought their children to school. I took account of the nine responses to the online staff questionnaire. We visited all the classrooms together with your deputy headteacher, to observe pupils' learning and talk to them about it. Work by pupils with a range of abilities, especially middle- and higher-ability pupils, was looked at in mathematics and English. I listened to a range of pupils reading aloud. A wide

range of documentation and information relating to your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, equalities, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and safeguarding, was also examined.