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Mrs Melanie Pallister
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Pallister

Short inspection of Manor Park Church of England First School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 March 2015.

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.**

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in the school. The school premises have been developed and refurbished. The classrooms are bright and attractive places for pupils to learn in. This year, in a move to strengthen children's early achievement, the on-site pre-school became part of the school. You have recently established a skilled team of senior leaders who have strategic roles in developing teaching, learning, the curriculum and inclusion. The school is a highly inclusive community. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and others with a range of social needs flourish academically and socially. Parents recognise this as a strength, and a parent typically described the school as 'Welcoming, friendly and child-centred.'

During this period of change, standards in the school dipped. You attribute this to the school responding too slowly to the raised expectations in the national curriculum. Teaching did not develop pupils' skills and knowledge quickly enough to meet the current national standards at the end of key stage 1. More recently, you have strengthened the curriculum for English and mathematics in order to improve pupils' achievement. As a result in 2018, standards at the end of Year 2 rose to match those found nationally. However, the targets set for Year 2 in this academic year are not set at a level which would indicate that the trend of improvement is secure. There is still some variability in the implementation of the new programmes

for learning. Consequently, at times, the quality of teaching and learning lacks the consistency needed to sustain improvement in pupils' progress. However, as teaching is strengthening, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is being supported well.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the teaching of handwriting. This is being taught more effectively in the current early years and key stage 1 classes. You have not yet overcome the legacy of weaker handwriting in key stage 2. You were also asked to share the best practice in teaching across the school. You have responded to this by providing teachers with additional support and guidance from the leader for teaching and learning. You have used external advice well to support the school in strengthening teaching.

In order to improve achievement, the progress of individual pupils is tracked closely. This has enabled you and your leaders to bring clarity to the evaluation of the work of the school. The school's development plan is accurate in identifying the areas where further improvement is needed. Governors are skilled and knowledgeable and are supporting you well in challenging all staff to be part of the drive for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

As leaders and staff you know pupils well and are vigilant for their safety. A well-trained team of experienced leaders respond effectively to concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. You promptly seek advice or refer concerns to agencies that are able to support families at times of need. Your team is assiduous in ensuring that pupils' needs are met. The school's pastoral team offers strong support for pupils and their families.

Governors ensure that the school's policies, procedures and record-keeping are fit for purpose. Through regular monitoring visits they maintain oversight of the school's effectiveness in safeguarding pupils' welfare. Leaders' checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with pupils are completed in an exemplary manner.

Pupils feel safe in school and know through the school's teaching in anti-bullying week that bullying is a serious matter. A small number of pupils feel that some playground concerns are not dealt with promptly. Inspection activities showed that staff usually help pupils to resolve any 'falling out'. You maintain records to show that you take effective action if any further concerns are raised. Although the use of fixed-term exclusion is reducing, it remains higher than recent national levels. You continue to develop strategies for improving the challenging behaviour of a very small number of pupils. Parents see the school as a safe place where their children's welfare has a high priority. A parent typically described the school's staff as 'An honest, nurturing, empathetic staff, who bring the best out in the children.'

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked at the steps that the school is taking to improve standards at the end of the Reception Year, including reviewing the effectiveness

of the pre-school. I also reviewed progress being made in raising standards in the phonics check in Year 1 and writing and mathematics across key stages 1 and 2.

- Teachers receive good professional development in order to develop pupils' deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. There is some strong practice where teachers explain new learning well and use prompts and challenges to sustain pupils' ongoing interest and achievement. Visits to lessons and reviews of pupils' work both in class and in a sample of workbooks showed that there is still variability in the quality of teaching in mathematics. On occasions, teachers do not explain the new presentations for mathematics clearly. When this is the case, pupils are hesitant to begin the task and go on to make errors or leave the task incomplete. Equally, some tasks lack sufficient challenge for the most able pupils, for example when their previous work showed that they had already grasped the concept that was being taught.
- There is now a planned approach to developing pupils' writing. Over time, the standards reached in writing by boys have been particularly low. Recent assessments show improvements in boys' attainment in writing. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are encouraged to build up pieces of writing over a series of lessons. They have guidance to develop interesting vocabulary and more complex sentences. There is still some inconsistency across the three classes in each year group about the expectations of how carefully pupils present their work and how fully they develop their ideas.
- The weaker handwriting and spelling skills seen at the last inspection persist for some pupils in key stage 2. Pupils are given opportunities to edit and improve some writing and to produce a fair copy. When they do this, the most able pupils produce work of a good standard. Pupils' final writing on the 'Iron Man' showed maturity. In their class pieces, however, both in Year 3 and in Year 4, pupils do not routinely set out their work well or take care to accurately use the spelling patterns they know. This limits their overall fluency and achievement in writing.
- You have implemented a new programme for teaching phonics skills. Standards rose last year for Year 1 pupils in the phonics check to be in line with the national average. Targets are set at this level for the current Year 1. The year group is taught in assessed groups and there is still some inconsistency in the quality of teaching of the different groups. Some staff lack the confidence or experience to deliver the programme to best effect. For example, they do not identify pupils' errors in forming letters or using incorrect phonics patterns quickly enough.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception year has been below the national average for the last two years. This is largely because too few children acquire the expected skills in writing. Children in the Reception Year now make good progress in forming letters and learning sounds, but leaders and teachers do not use assessment sharply enough to set targets to enable more children to reach the early learning goal for writing.
- Staff in the pre-school assess children's needs promptly. Staff use the information gathered to plan activities that are closely matched to the children's next steps in learning. The setting is calm and purposeful. Where they contribute to learning, children's interests are followed by staff. The staff in both the pre-school setting and the Reception classes share professional development and closer team

working. This is deepening staff's awareness of what children can achieve across the whole early years age range.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders secure consistency in teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in writing and mathematics, to continue improvements in pupils' attainment
- teachers, including those in the early years, make effective use of assessment information to plan teaching that challenges all pupils
- teachers in key stage 2 continue to develop pupils' fluency in handwriting and accuracy of spelling.

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

Wendy Marriott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and together we visited all classes to review their learning. We also visited the pre-school. I reviewed pupils' work when visiting classrooms as well as looking more closely at the work we agreed to sample. I met with your senior leadership team and considered current assessments of pupils' progress and targets. We reviewed the steps you are taking to improve teaching. I spoke to the chair of governors on the telephone and met with two governors, including the vice-chair. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation and its plans for school development. I examined a variety of documents in relation to safeguarding, including child protection and safer recruitment. I met with a group of pupils and spoke to others at lunchtime. I took account of the views of parents expressed in 43 responses to Parent View, 37 additional written comments and one email. I talked to parents at the start of the school day and met with two parents who asked to see me. The views of staff in the 45 responses to the staff survey were also considered.