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Mrs Lucie Mitchell
Acting Headteacher
Miserden Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Mitchell

Short inspection of Miserden Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 November 2014.

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.**

The last inspection recommended that leaders improve teaching to increase the proportion of pupils making strong progress. However, over time, too few pupils achieve the expected standards, either at the end of the early years or in the Year 1 phonics check. There was a sharp decline in the proportion of pupils who achieved in line with the national average at the end of key stage 2 last year. A small minority of pupils attain at above the average level in key stage 1 and 2 over time.

You joined the school as acting headteacher in September 2017, following a turbulent period for the school, caused by considerable changes to leadership and staffing. You have taken urgent action to address the school's main priorities. For example, you have developed close links with other schools and enlisted the help of the local authority. This is helping you to support middle leaders and teachers to improve teaching. You have also taken concerted action to develop more rigorous safeguarding procedures and improve the school's financial accountability. Since Easter, for two days each week, you have enrolled nursery-aged children into the school for the first time. Parents and carers who shared their views are pleased with this new development. They say that it will be valuable in helping their children to make the transition into Reception when they begin formal schooling.

Due to improved teaching, the proportion of pupils who achieved as expected in relation to their starting points at the end of key stage 2 increased this year. However, few pupils achieved higher standards, particularly in writing and mathematics. Teaching in the early years and key stage 1 has not improved well enough to ensure that pupils consistently achieve well.

Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They feel safe at school and say that adults look after them well. They have good relationships with staff and other pupils and are extremely polite and welcoming to visitors. Pupils know what you expect of them and they say that behaviour is good. Your behaviour logs confirm that there are relatively few behavioural issues and those that there are are minor.

Almost all parents comment favourably on the positive impact of your leadership. A long letter sent by one parent outlined how you came to the school 'like a breath of fresh air' and 'picked up the pieces of a fragmented school and put it firmly back together.' Other parents typically comment on the 'warm and friendly' atmosphere and 'incredible cohesive team'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Since you began in post, you have taken swift action to improve the culture of safeguarding, so that all staff are accountable for keeping pupils safe. You have filled the gaps in administration by undertaking a thorough overhaul of the school's safeguarding records. These are now well organised and up to date. You undertake the necessary checks to ensure that all adults working in the school are safe to work with children. You meticulously record these details on the school's single central record.

You provide relevant safeguarding training for all staff and, as a result, they understand what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. You keep records securely and routinely follow up your actions to ensure that they are making a difference. Staff are well equipped to support pupils' medical needs, because you have clear procedures for administering medication when pupils need it. Parents typically comment how much they appreciate this care. Staff undertake detailed risk assessments to ensure that pupils are kept safe on school trips.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to find out how well children are achieving in the early years. This is because children do not achieve consistently well over time. Teaching does not routinely help children to develop secure skills across all areas of learning. For example, phonics teaching does not consistently encourage children to apply their phonics knowledge to spell words for themselves. This inhibits their progress. Your latest assessment information and reviews of children's learning confirm that few children in the early years make strong progress. As a result, too few children achieve or exceed the expected standards.

- Following the considerable decline in outcomes in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 last year, I wanted to find out as my second line of enquiry what actions leaders are taking to improve teaching in these subjects across the school. I also wanted to look at how effectively teaching supports disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is because, over time, progress for these pupils is often weaker than that of other pupils.
- You have developed partnerships with other schools and the local authority to support teachers and leaders to develop the monitoring of teaching. This is helping all leaders to identify how to improve teaching.
- More effective teaching has considerably improved outcomes at the end of key stage 2 during the current school year. However, too few pupils achieve higher standards. Adults in the school have good relationships with pupils, but sometimes their expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. This is because assessment does not routinely take into account what pupils can already do. As a result, teachers sometimes plan work that does not sufficiently challenge pupils. This leads to pupils repeating skills that they have already secured and they complete work easily. Approximately one third of current pupils have made weak progress and half of all pupils are not achieving sufficiently for their age.
- You have taken on the role of special educational needs co-ordinator and you are working closely with staff to plan additional teaching to help pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to make better progress. You also provide extra help for disadvantaged pupils who are falling behind in their learning. This is helping some disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to make stronger progress. However, given the fact that many pupils are attaining at below national averages, pupils need to make better progress to catch up.
- Governors are fully committed to supporting school improvement. As a result, they undertake a range of activities to help them to find out how you are improving outcomes for pupils. However, they are not entirely sure how to evaluate pupils' achievement. This limits how well they can hold you to account when teaching needs to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- early years teaching, including the teaching of phonics, improves so that more children achieve well
- improved assessment ensures that teachers pitch learning at precisely the right level to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress
- targeted support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities accelerates their progress so that they catch up and attain well
- governors and middle leaders are provided with appropriate support to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching accurately so that they can take action when it needs to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Beeks

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I had several discussions during our meetings. I met with the early years leader, who is also the subject co-ordinator for mathematics. I also met with a group of governors and had a telephone conversation with the safeguarding governor. I held a meeting with two advisers from the local authority.

I checked the school's single central record and we discussed your safeguarding procedures. We reviewed the school's latest assessment information and discussed the school's self-evaluation and development priorities. Together, we observed learning in the school's two mixed-age classes, which consist of pupils from Reception to Year 2 and pupils from Year 3 to Year 6. I spoke with pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtime. You and I jointly reviewed pupils' work in English and mathematics in Year 3 and Year 5. I also reviewed Reception children's work with the early years leader.

I talked to several parents at the beginning of the school day and considered 27 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View along with 18 additional free-text comments. I also took account of a letter from a parent, which included a comment from their child. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils or staff.