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Mrs Fiona Deakin
Headteacher
St Matthew's Church of England (Aided) Primary School
Windmill Lane
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West Midlands
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Dear Mrs Deakin

Short inspection of St Matthew's Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 2016, 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your deputy headteacher and governors provide strong and effective leadership. Staff and governors are clearly committed to pupils and their families, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, as you are successful in helping children overcome barriers to learning. A great deal has been achieved since the previous inspection to raise standards, particularly in writing, which was an area for improvement the last time your school was inspected in 2012. Standards in reading and mathematics have also improved well in key stage 2.

This is a successful and inclusive school which embraces diversity and a respect for all children and families, whatever their backgrounds, cultures or circumstances. For example, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do particularly well. A highly skilled leader manages effectively the provision for special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ensures that pupils who find learning difficult or who have disabilities are provided with stimulating, varied and focused intervention programmes, enabling them to make good progress. The large number of pupils who join the school speaking little or no English also achieve well and soon catch up by engaging in conversation with other pupils and adults. The teaching improves pupils' vocabulary and their confidence to use spoken English. Pupils in the early stage of learning English apply their new-found speaking skills very well, which helps them to become

independent readers.

All the parents I spoke to were very pleased with the quality of education and high levels of care and attention you and your staff provide for their children. Some have written to the Ofsted regional office by text, paying tribute to you and your staff. For example, representing the views of most parents, one commented: 'Mrs Deakin and the staff at St Matthew's work very hard to ensure that individual children get the support they need.' Another parent rightly stated that 'St Matthew's should be proud of the fantastic community it has built.' There is a real buzz of excitement as pupils are energised by the school's curriculum and the opportunities it provides for them to improve both their personal and academic development. In addition to helping pupils achieve well, your staff, leaders and governors make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education beyond key stage 2.

Your early years team have maintained the good quality provision for Nursery and Reception children since the previous inspection in 2012. This provision provides good foundations in children's development, especially in language and literacy.

Leaders and staff work hard to help pupils thrive in a very positive climate for learning. The teaching is good throughout the school, and standards are improving well, particularly in key stage 2 where, in some classes, pupils make outstanding progress. However, you all recognise that more could still be done to improve achievement in key stage 1, so that more pupils reach age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

The most recent national phonics screening test results improved on the previous year, reflecting more consistent teaching of early reading and literacy. Again, you have rightly identified that there is still scope to improve this further so that more pupils reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. A good start has been made in the early years because the teaching of phonics links more closely now to the way pupils are taught early reading and writing skills in key stage 1.

Pupils make good progress in relation to their low starting points and, by the time pupils finish key stage 2, the majority reach age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence from the most recent assessments shows that the picture of pupils' progress matches that of the quality of teaching. Disadvantaged pupils in particular achieve well, many of them very well, and there is little or no difference between their progress and that of other pupils.

Since the previous inspection you and your deputy headteacher have skilfully devised effective strategies to improve teaching. Staff development through proficient mentoring is a strong feature of leadership. You were very accurate when you told me 'We grow our own leaders.' You achieve this through high-quality training and effective professional development links with your local network of schools. However, together with the deputy headteacher, we looked at pupils' work in books and agreed that some teachers should be providing more challenging tasks or posing questions that enable pupils of all abilities to think

more deeply about their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your staff and governors are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe and secure in school. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and robust, including the electronic visitor reporting system in the school's reception area. Staff vetting procedures include systematic checks on visitors, volunteers, governors and supply staff. The indoor and outdoor areas, including a good range of stimulating resources and areas available for early years children, are clean, safe and secure. When asked, pupils explained what to do to keep themselves safe when using the internet or mobile devices. Risk assessments of all school activities are carried out routinely. You and the governors make sure that staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities by making sure that safeguarding and child protection training is carried out systematically. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time, yet you go the extra mile to make sure that pupils are safe if not attending school, by regularly contacting and keeping in touch with families.

Inspection findings

- Your staff are all passionate about the school's values, 'Faith, respect, learning together and choices'. High-quality displays of pupils' art work and independent writing, including prayers written by pupils and used during assemblies and acts of worship, show that pupils' efforts are valued by all.
- Pupils enjoy school and wear their smart school uniform with pride. I saw how happy pupils were as they arrived at school in the morning, keen to meet their friends and ready for the challenges ahead.
- Parents are right in their views that school leaders, staff and governors are ambitious, caring and visionary. You and your staff foster the values that lie at the heart of this Church of England school. Staff and governors are successful in promoting core British values of respect and tolerance of all world faiths, customs and traditions.
- Improvements to teaching since the previous inspection have been managed very well. You and your deputy headteacher have adopted a range of strategies, for example by deploying teachers to work together as a team in lessons; encouraging teachers and support staff to see and share best practice; and linking experienced with less experienced staff so they learn from the best practice that exists across the school.
- Some teachers and support staff are not checking enough to see if pupils fully understand what they have learned, in order to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding or the next steps of their learning. The most effective teaching does this very well and this practice is not fully exploited by all teachers.
- The good foundations laid in the early years help pupils to make good progress over time in early literacy and mathematics. Teachers and support staff are also being deployed effectively to focus on early literacy and phonics skills, including an effective intervention programme which promotes language and communication. This programme is now well established and bearing fruit, as

increasingly more children in the early years reach a good level of development.

- The teaching of phonics in the early years is now more in keeping with the practice evident in Year 1, so that more children reach the expected standard. Despite this improvement, more remains to be done to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1.
- The early years leader and staff help parents to support their children's learning at home by regularly holding workshops, one of which I was privileged to see in the Nursery during the inspection. This was very well attended by parents, carers and grandparents.
- Catch-up programmes for groups of pupils who do not yet reach age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics are effective, and you have adapted these still further to ensure that more key stage 1 pupils reach age-related standards.
- The learning network with other local schools and the professional development of your staff team are core strengths. Staff morale is high as a result, and newly qualified or recently appointed teachers benefit from high-quality support, mentoring and coaching.
- The provision made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a key strength. The focused interventions are planned as part of what you call a 'bespoke curriculum'. The work provided for pupils who find learning difficult in all classes is well devised and delivered effectively.
- The deputy headteacher manages assessment information very well and presents this to governors in an accessible format so they can question and challenge staff and leaders about pupils' progress and performance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a continued focus on raising standards in key stage 1 and sustain the increase in the number of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1
- teachers provide enough challenge in lessons to ensure that pupils make as much progress as possible
- teachers regularly assess and check that pupils understand what is being taught, to identify and address any differences in their knowledge and understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the coordinator in charge of special educational needs provision. I reviewed and discussed with you and the deputy headteacher your school self-evaluation document. We visited every class together to observe teaching and learning, and spoke to pupils during lessons. I also spoke to pupils during lunchtime and met a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school, their work, their progress and safety. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and considered five responses sent by text to Ofsted's West Midlands regional office, as well as the 30 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with four members of the governing body, including the vice-chair, as well as the local authority's school improvement adviser, to discuss the school's performance. I scrutinised some examples of assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress, and checked safeguarding and staff vetting procedures.

During this short inspection I tested four lines of enquiry:

- the extent to which children in the early years and pupils in Year 1 were making progress, particularly in early reading and phonics
- the quality of teaching and the extent to which it has improved since the previous inspection
- the standards attained by pupils in key stage 1 and the achievement of the most able pupils across the school
- the extent to which leaders and staff are reducing the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others.