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Jan Matthews
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Dear Miss Matthews

Short inspection of St Michael's C of E Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 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 May 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 have established an ethos in which all staff value and celebrate the unique achievements of every pupil. As one pupil put it, 'Staff will do anything they can to help us be the best we can be.' This is enabling pupils to flourish in their personal development.

Together with the deputy headteacher, you are rigorous in your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Your plans for improvement identify accurately which aspects of the school's work could be even better. Leaders and staff are clear about what they need to do to strengthen the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. For example, effective phonics teaching has ensured that pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics check has improved substantially since the previous inspection. In 2016, it was above the national average.

Leaders know individual pupils well and have high aspirations. You and your deputy monitor carefully whether pupils are developing the skills and knowledge expected for their age. However, leaders do not always check if their actions are reducing differences in how well different cohorts or groups of pupils achieve. Leaders recognise that there is still much work to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and other more vulnerable groups make better, more rapid progress than currently. This is reflected in the school's current plans for improvement.

You have successfully addressed the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected

standard in the key stage 1 and key stage 2 mathematics assessments was above the national average. This is because pupils practise their calculation skills regularly. Teachers also provide pupils with clear explanations and well-chosen resources to help them develop a secure understanding of the methods they use. Leaders have identified that pupils' outcomes could be even better if the mathematics curriculum gave greater emphasis to problem-solving skills. The school's plans for improvement give this high priority. However, leaders' actions have yet to have a clear impact on improving outcomes for the current pupils in key stage 1 and for disadvantaged pupils. School assessment information showed that a large proportion of these pupils are not developing their mathematical skills and understanding at the rate leaders expect.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. Leaders also ensure that recruitment procedures are rigorous. All staff have undergone appropriate checks to ensure that they are suitable to work in the school. They receive regular training so they are clear about their role in keeping pupils safe. This includes their duty to report pupils at risk of radicalisation or female genital mutilation. Records show that staff are vigilant and report concerns promptly. Leaders make sure that these records are detailed and of high quality. As a result, they have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of pupils who may be vulnerable and are quick to provide additional help. This includes drawing on support from external agencies, including the local authority's 'Early Help' service.

Governors regularly check the school's work to promote pupils' welfare. For example, they seek pupils' views on safety and behaviour, and conduct in-depth reviews of safeguarding arrangements. This ensures that procedures are continuously strengthened.

Pupils told me they feel safe in school and that adults help them resolve any issues quickly. They understand the different systems the school uses to help them feel well cared for. For example, pupils explained how they could use a 'worry box' to let adults know if they felt upset. Pupils are taught ways to keep themselves safe, including when they use the internet. The majority of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, agree that their child is happy and well looked after in school. Pupils told me everyone gets along well together, their behaviour is sensible and that there is no bullying. Responses to Parent View indicate that the majority of parents think the school deals with bullying effectively.

Inspection findings

- For the first line of enquiry, I focused on the achievement of the most able boys in key stage 2, particularly in reading. In the 2016 key stage 2 reading test, boys made excellent progress overall. However, the proportion of boys who achieved the high standard was lower than the national average and significantly below that of girls in the school.
- Your work to raise the attainment of the most able boys is proving to be successful. Boys thrive in their learning, because leaders have ensured that the teaching of reading and writing is challenging. In-depth discussions and effective questioning help pupils to explore why an author has included certain phrases and the impact they have on the reader. This approach also supports pupils to develop their writing skills. Teachers expect pupils to think carefully about which language features will be most effective in communicating their ideas to the reader. As a result, the most able boys produce writing that is of consistently high quality.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about how much they enjoyed reading, describing it as, 'fantastic', 'important' and 'cool'. Staff help pupils select books that are appropriately challenging and reflect their interests. This contributes to pupils' positive attitudes, and ensures that they read books to stretch their vocabulary and comprehension skills.
- In 2016, pupils made strong progress in mathematics overall. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 was higher than the national average. However, comparatively, the progress of middle-attaining disadvantaged pupils was not as strong at key stages 1 and 2. Therefore, my second line of enquiry explored pupils' achievement in mathematics, focusing particularly on those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- In order to raise standards for all pupils in mathematics, you identified that the teaching of problem-solving skills needs to be given higher priority. Together, we reviewed the school's assessment information to evaluate whether leaders' actions were improving outcomes for the current pupils. This showed that a large proportion of the current pupils are not developing the skills and knowledge at the rate that leaders expect. This was particularly evident for pupils in key stage 1 and for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are confident that their actions will help these pupils catch up quickly. However, I found that in key stage 1, teaching is not consistently challenging pupils to achieve to the very best of their capabilities.
- Visits to lessons and work in pupils' books showed that pupils are not routinely tackling demanding calculations or problems, even when they are ready to do so. Some pupils finish tasks quickly and have to wait for their peers to catch up before they move on. This slows the progress they make.
- In the early years, leaders are quick to identify disadvantaged pupils who need additional support to be well prepared for their learning in Year 1. High-quality small group teaching is particularly effective in helping disadvantaged pupils develop the basic skills expected for their age.

- In the 2016 key stage 2 writing assessments, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made slower progress than their peers with similar starting points. Consequently, my third line of enquiry explored whether the provision for these pupils was well matched to their needs.
- Visits to lessons and my scrutiny of pupils' books showed that outcomes for these pupils in writing are improving. You have ensured that assessments of pupils' needs are accurate and comprehensive. Consequently, staff are clear about the support they need to provide to help pupils learn and achieve well. Visits to lessons showed that adults provide precise examples and explanations so that pupils build effectively on what they already know or can do. This includes using their knowledge of grammar and punctuation to improve the structure of the sentences they write.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in key stage 1, pupils routinely tackle mathematical calculations and problems which stretch their skills and knowledge so that they achieve to the very best of their capabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Murphy-Dutton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I visited lessons across the school. The majority of these visits were carried out jointly with senior leaders. I also held meetings with leaders to evaluate the impact of their work to strengthen the quality of teaching and improve outcomes for all groups of pupils. This included a meeting with three middle leaders who have responsibility for English, mathematics and the early years. I listened to pupils read, observed pupils' behaviour and spoke to them about their learning. A range of school documentation was scrutinised, including safeguarding records, assessment information and the school's plans for improvement. Meetings were held with representatives from the governing body and the school's improvement partner from the local authority. I also considered 119 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.