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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Jennifer Parris
Headteacher
St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School
48 Brayards Road
London
SE15 3RA

Dear Mrs Parris

Short inspection of St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This has been achieved despite a period of instability and considerable staff turnover. You have been determined that pupils' learning would not be compromised as a result of recruitment difficulties. To tackle this, both you and your deputy headteacher have taken on whole-class teaching responsibilities at various points during the year. You have managed successfully to recruit some highly effective staff to your senior leadership team. In addition, you have recruited several middle leaders to strengthen the school's capacity further. You, and your deputy headteacher, have acted quickly to induct and train new members of staff. As result, a strong team spirit already exists and staff morale is high. Everyone is fully supportive of you and understands how to achieve your vision of high expectations for all.

You have addressed successfully all the issues identified at the time of the last inspection. As a result, in 2016, pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics were strong, with results being higher than those achieved nationally. During this very challenging period, you have worked effectively with governors. They are knowledgeable and well informed and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They visit the school often and talk to pupils, parents and teachers to gather their views. They ask challenging and searching questions of both you and your senior leaders.

Although only a few parents responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the majority of those who spoke to me were very positive. They

reported that their children were safe and well cared for. They were all confident that they could approach the school with any concerns. While some parents said they had felt anxious about the recent changes in staffing, they reported that they felt that new staff were now very much part of the school community and making a positive contribution to their child's learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff have received the required safeguarding training to support their understanding and knowledge of the government's current statutory guidance. Clear procedures are in place and staff know how to report concerns. Senior leaders are extremely vigilant at following up all actions and engage well with external agencies.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils are clear about how to protect themselves when online. Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying. They know what to do if they experience bullying and are confident to report it to a member of the school staff, who will resolve any issues.

Inspection findings

- Given the recent changes to staffing, our initial discussion focused on how leaders have ensured that the improvements made in 2016 are sustained and built upon. I found that the school knows its pupils well and moves swiftly to identify barriers to learning. You have developed a culture where pupils are encouraged to seek support and guidance so that they feel comfortable sharing their successes and struggles. One pupil told me, 'It's important to share mistakes as other people might learn from them too.'
- You have built a collaborative culture. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely and effectively together. They support each other well, sharing skills and knowledge. You provide leaders with the effective guidance to ensure that they perform their roles to a high standard.
- You have robust systems in place for monitoring, planning, tracking and assessing pupils' progress. These systems have ensured that pupils continue to achieve well in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, pupils' progress in all subjects is not tracked and monitored as well as in these subjects. Middle leaders now need to ensure that pupils' progress in their subject areas is as effective as it is in English and mathematics.
- You were proactive in securing additional and effective support from experienced consultants to help you achieve the school's goals during this period of staffing instability. As a result, you have met most pupil progress targets.
- The school has a broad curriculum which meets the requirements of the national curriculum. It is developed and adapted with pupils' needs and interests in mind. Pupils spoke enthusiastically to me about the interesting trips and visits from outside speakers that further enrich their lessons. They reported how much they

enjoy investigations in science.

- Leaders and governors have rightly identified that pupils who achieved the highest levels at the end of key stage 1 in reading did not perform as well by the end of key stage 2. This was particularly true for the most able disadvantaged pupils. To address this, you have purchased new resources, including electronic versions of books and more challenging texts. Teachers have also received well-considered training and support to help them develop their practice. I listened to some of these pupils read, and it was evident that they are now extremely engaged and motivated. They told me that they enjoyed reading both in school and at home, and that the electronic texts had been particularly useful in providing them with more independence. The school's assessment information shows that they now make better progress.
- The least able and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the effective support and guidance they receive.
- The most able mathematicians are not challenged sufficiently to make the progress they are capable of. Work in books shows that they are not moved on quickly enough once they have a secure understanding of a particular mathematical concept. As a result, some pupils spend too much time doing work that is too easy for them.
- The teaching of grammar and spelling has a high focus across the school. As a result, pupils are able to write increasingly complex sentences. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils' writing in their literacy books is of a high standard. However, the same expectations are not maintained across all subject areas. As a result, standards in handwriting, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure are variable.
- Finally, I considered how effective leaders' actions have been to improve attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This was because, in 2016, persistent absence for this group was higher than that found nationally. I found that there are many successful initiatives in place, including rewards and a breakfast club, to support good attendance. As a result, attendance is now above national averages for almost all groups of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the standard of pupils' written work, particularly their spelling, handwriting, punctuation and grammar, is as high in all subjects as it is in their English books
- the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently in mathematics to ensure that they achieve the higher levels
- middle leaders contribute fully to improving tracking and progress outcomes in their subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Diocese of Southwark, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I carried out the following activities:

- meetings with you, governors including the chair, senior and middle leaders and a representative from the local authority
- meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding
- informal meetings with parents in the playground before school
- visits to all classrooms accompanied by senior leaders, where I talked to pupils about their learning, looked at their books and listened to a range of pupils read
- a review of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.