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Mr Julian Morant
Headteacher
Christ Church CofE Primary School
47a Brick Lane
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Dear Mr Morant

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

Parents and staff speak of your charismatic and effective leadership and say that you are pivotal in offering stability and direction to the school. You and your leadership team have high expectations combined with a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and development needs.

Governors are fully involved in the life of the school. Based on your thorough school self-evaluation, they are able to ask informed questions about the school's effectiveness. They have been active in improving the school grounds to create an impressive early years environment. The attractive outdoor gardens, developed as part of the early years provision, greatly enhance the learning opportunities for all pupils.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong and their behaviour shows empathy and consideration for all. Pupils are nurtured well and show a deep understanding of the needs of others. One pupil proudly explained 'This school is really special because it teaches me to respect others and to value everyone.' Displays in school are bright and attractive and reflect the diversity of the community. British values are widely promoted across the school and values of tolerance, respect and inclusion are a central part of the school's ethos.

At the time of the previous inspection, it was reported that middle leaders had been recently appointed and would require support to enable them to take an active role in school improvement. The school has responded well to this by offering coaching

sessions to all leaders. This has raised teachers' understanding of their responsibilities and placed an emphasis on accountability and improved outcomes. Inspectors also commented on some pupils' lack of certainty about their next steps in learning and the lack of challenge for the most-able pupils. The school has improved policies and practices, including staff training, to tackle both of these issues. As a result, for example, meetings to discuss pupils' progress are much more rigorous and most-able pupils are identified within teachers' planning. Pupils' books are monitored closely. Even so, more needs to be done to improve the quality of writing, particularly for the most-able pupils to write at greater length.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of a high quality. The school has a robust safeguarding culture where pupils' safety and well-being is of paramount importance to all staff.

The designated safeguarding lead is well known to all staff and clear systems are in place for raising initial concerns and making referrals. Personnel files contain all the necessary pre-employment checks and all staff have had training on keeping children safe in education, including the risks of radicalisation, extremism and female genital mutilation.

Parents are rightly proud that this small school has a strong sense of community. Parents describe this as a 'sense of belonging' where each child feels welcomed and safe. Pupils report that they enjoy school and know that they are listened to if they have a concern.

Inspection Findings

- The early years curriculum has been reviewed by the leadership team, specifically to ensure that children receive the right level of challenge across the ability range. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is now well targeted to children's abilities, with a wide range of early reading and writing experiences. Children choose from a rich resource of reading materials. Writing tasks are skilfully planned to build on what children can already do. Children's development in reading, writing and number is tracked very carefully and at the end of the Reception Year all children are ready for the challenge of the Year 1 curriculum.
- My second line of enquiry was to evaluate the effectiveness of phonics teaching. In 2016, Year 1 pupils did not do as well as their peers nationally in the annual phonics screening check. This was particularly so for disadvantaged pupils. In 2017, there was considerable improvement, with results above the national average for all pupils.
- Pupils are now taught phonics in groups set by ability, with a clear plan for progress in learning phonic sounds. Support is available for pupils requiring further practice. Pupils' reading showed that they now have a wide range of decoding strategies to tackle new words and self-correct the errors they make.

- Writing has been identified by the senior leadership team as a whole-school priority, particularly so for the most-able pupils. As such, we agreed to look at the quality of writing at key stage 2.
- Pupils' writing shows clear progression in the development of skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils enjoy writing and activities offer a wide range of writing experiences. However, outcomes are still variable across year groups, as are the opportunities pupils have to write at length. This particularly affects outcomes for most-able pupils. The leadership team is aware of this issue and plans are in place within the school development plan to address this.
- My final line of enquiry was pupils' rates of attendance. The most recent data available indicated that absence and persistent absence was high for particular groups of pupils.
- The school has strong and effective strategies in place to monitor and improve attendance. Detailed records are kept to monitor absence and the school has worked in close partnership with parents to discourage extended holidays during term time. The school also tracks medical absence closely.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of writing supports pupils' consistent rapid progress across the school
- writing tasks present more challenge, so that most-able pupils in particular practise key skills in writing and write at greater length.

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

Yours sincerely

Tom Canning
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection.

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and senior leaders, including the attendance leader and the designated safeguarding lead. I met with all staff at the beginning of the day. I met with parents informally as they arrived at school with their children. I met with two school governors and with the local authority school improvement adviser.

I visited all classrooms with senior leaders, spoke to pupils and looked at pupils' books. I listened to pupils read from Years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. I met with members of the school council.

I viewed 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also viewed the responses of seven staff and four pupil questionnaires.

I scrutinised a range of documents including those relating to self-evaluation and planning, the school's assessment information and safeguarding policies and procedures.