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12 February 2018

Mrs Julia Warner
Deputy Headteacher
St Matthew's CofE Primary School
Cottenham Park Road
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Dear Mrs Warner

Short inspection of St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

In the absence of the headteacher due to ill health, leaders have established strong links with the local authority and other local schools to provide additional challenge and support. As a result, there is an established, strong leadership team which enables this school to continue effectively even when key leaders are absent. Together, they have successfully contributed to monitoring and improving the overall quality of teaching.

You, supported by middle leaders, demonstrate an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You use this knowledge effectively to secure good outcomes for pupils. Leaders check every child's progress accurately using a range of useful approaches. Leaders make sure that pupils receive the extra help they need to catch up, and you check the impact of that help. As a result, pupils currently at the school make good progress.

Leaders have dealt successfully with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have rightfully focused on developing the capacity of middle leaders to drive improvement. Middle leaders have been provided with opportunities to work with leaders from other schools. They now demonstrate deep understanding of the areas they lead. Their strategic approach has brought improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Middle leaders provide effective support to teachers who are new to the school, ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good. As a result, pupils' performance in

end-of-key-stage tests is now in line with national average across all subjects.

School leaders, however, recognise that work remains to be done to improve progress of key stage 2 pupils in reading, particularly for those with low starting points.

The governing body is committed to the school and helps you to drive forward improvement. Governors monitor the progress of leaders' plans to raise standards. You provide them with accurate information which enables them to challenge the school effectively. They also make regular visits to the school to find out for themselves what is happening in practice.

The school is a happy and friendly place. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are enthusiastic about their learning. As a result, they engage actively in lessons. Classrooms are positive places where pupils work well together. Pupils take pride in their learning. They are polite, and they show respect for adults and each other. Parents appreciate the work the school community does for their children. One parent commented: 'It is a school which holds the children's welfare at its heart.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff and governors keep up to date with training. As a result, staff know what actions to take if they have any concerns about pupils' safety or well-being. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You work actively with external agencies and refer concerns in a timely manner. Records show that you take decisive and prompt action, when needed, to secure pupils' well-being.

Pupils say they feel safe. They show understanding of the need for safety when using computers, and when exploring the internet. They also know to whom they should go if they need to report a bullying or cyber bullying incident. Pupils are confident that any concerns will be listened to and swiftly acted upon. They say they are able to talk to adults whenever they have any concerns or worries. The pupils I spoke to explained how they receive support to resolve issues between them, or when they are going through some difficult times.

Inspection findings

- In our initial discussion, we identified reading as a key line of enquiry for this inspection. This was because assessment information for two consecutive years indicated that pupils with low starting points, and disadvantaged pupils at key stage 2, had made slower progress than expected in reading.
- You have reviewed the way reading is taught across the school. There is now a whole-school focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills, which was evident from my visits in lessons. You also ensure that pupils have access to high-quality reading materials. This is engaging pupils in their reading and extending their

reading choices. When hearing pupils read, I found that younger pupils are confident in using a range of decoding strategies in their reading. The most able readers also display good expression, intonation and understanding of text.

- Your focus on the development of comprehension skills is enabling pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to meet expected standards in reading. Pupils' knowledge of phonics is strong. However, pupils with low starting points in key stage 2 still do not make rapid enough progress to meet expected standards. You recognise that they need additional support in developing more sophisticated reading skills, such as inference and deduction. You have effective plans to provide this support.
- We also looked at the teaching of writing across the school. This was because in 2017 disadvantaged pupils did not make the rate of progress expected of them in writing. Leaders have ensured that improving the teaching of writing has been a considerable focus over the last two years. As a result, pupils' writing has improved rapidly throughout the school.
- Pupils now write extensively across subjects. Their writing reflects an understanding of features of different genres. They are consistently stretched and challenged. Consequently, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, meet, and in some cases exceed, expected standards in writing.
- In key stage 1, pupils benefit from a range of activities to develop their vocabulary prior to writing. This is complemented by opportunities to practise and consolidate their spelling, grammar, and punctuation skills. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, meet expected standards in writing.
- In key stage 2, pupils are knowledgeable about the various skills they need to apply when they are writing. Teachers are persistent in their high expectations. They demand the best from pupils when writing and provide helpful guidance. One pupil explained: 'You need to edit your work to produce the best piece and if needed, teachers will give you advice.'
- Finally, we looked at attendance. Published attendance data shows that overall pupils' attendance is consistently above the national average. However, close examination of the information highlights that in previous years, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attended much less frequently than others. These groups with the lowest attendance rates also have the highest rates of persistent absence.
- Your detailed analysis of current pupils shows that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved rapidly. You now follow up all absences immediately. Where necessary, you make good use of the local authority's education welfare officer to support families and promote attendance. Records show that very few pupils are absent without good reason. You have used the pupil premium funding effectively to support the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in key stage 2 with low starting points are supported well to develop inference and deduction skills in reading, so they achieve standards of which they are capable.

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 Merton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Edison David
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and middle leaders. I also considered responses to Parent View, the pupil survey and the staff survey. I spoke to pupils to discuss their experiences in lessons, the extent to which they feel safe, and also their views on learning and behaviour. I held discussions with the local authority's representative. I met with members of the governing body, who provided additional information. I also considered documentation provided by the school and information on the school's website. I looked at the single central record, and the analysis of pupils' attendance. Together with school leaders, I visited classes to observe learning and I looked at samples of pupils' work across all subjects. I listened to reading by pupils from across the ability range.