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Mrs Lisa Martin
Head of School
St Martin's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Martin

Short inspection of St Martin's Church of England 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

As head of school, you have developed a positive working culture in the school. Staff are proud to work in the school, and pupils and parents and carers feel supported by you and the executive headteacher. There has been a high staff turnover due to a number of maternity leaves. However, you have started to develop a newly formed middle leadership team, which, in time, will help you further to improve the consistency of teaching across school. However, this team is still in its infancy and, as a result, its work is not yet having an impact.

You have created a culture of trust and transparency with pupils and parents and, as a result, everyone involved in the school supports your vision and leadership. You and your staff know your pupils and the community well. Your partnerships with parents are positive, and your staff team works hard to make sure that no pupils feel left out. Pupils are positive about their school experiences and have a high amount of respect for one another. Relationships at all levels are a strength of the school. One child reported, 'I love school because the teachers look after us well and learning is fun.' The findings from the staff questionnaire show that all staff feel valued and supported.

The local academy committee and the directors of the trust provide a robust strategic direction, which is focused on continuous improvement. Committee

members are rigorous in their approach to checking leaders' work and challenge the way in which additional funding is used to support the most vulnerable pupils. As a result of this, and determination of the staff team, disadvantaged pupils are beginning to catch up with their peers.

Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. You have successfully addressed the areas identified for improvement, and actions have had a positive impact on standards. One of the issues you were asked to address was to improve attendance. Due to your systematic and analytical approach, attendance is now above national figures for all groups of pupils.

Reading was an area for improvement, and you have introduced a number of new initiatives. Current data shows that there is accelerated progress in this area, and pupils' reading across school is improving. During the inspection, I heard a number of children read across the school. Their ability to break down words and read quite complex texts is evidence that the skill of reading is being taught systematically. However, more work needs to be done in order to challenge the most able in their reading.

You were precise and accurate in your judgements during our learning walk and work scrutiny. You have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for improvement. Your improvement plans are extremely clear and focused, which helps the middle leaders to create their own more detailed plans to drive standards in their subjects forward. You have created a culture of openness and honesty, where successes are celebrated. However, you continue to focus on what needs to be done next to further raise attainment.

You have continued to improve the school environment and it is now a place that pupils, staff and parents are proud to be part of. Teachers take great care in creating classrooms that provide prompts to help pupils with their day-to-day learning. Leaders have developed outdoor and indoor areas that provide stimulating environments.

Safeguarding is effective.

The head of school, executive headteacher and pastoral lead make sure that safeguarding is a priority of the school. There are robust policies and procedures in place to keep pupils safe.

All relevant checks on staff, visitors and volunteers are carried out rigorously. The head of school ensures that all staff and committee members receive regular training and information. Consequently, staff are kept up to date in all aspects of safeguarding, including the prevention of radicalisation and extremism.

Your pastoral lead in the school is a great strength. She knows the community and pupils extremely well and works very closely with your and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) in school and across the multi-academy trust to ensure that all children are kept safe and receive the correct support. Timely, suitable

action is taken by this group to address any issues or concerns. This includes working with external agencies where necessary.

All pupils said that they feel safe in school. Parents and staff agree. Behaviour around the school is good, and there are various monitors, including peer monitors and digital ambassadors. These monitors are trained to keep other pupils safe in school and online. The monitors were spoken to and were extremely proud of their positions and the impact they have on the school.

Inspection findings

- You identified that disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 did not make enough progress and, as a result, you made this a priority by investing in a number of initiatives and putting in additional staffing to improve outcomes for these pupils. Current data and work in books now show that these pupils are making accelerated progress and, as a result, are catching up with their peers.
- Phonics teaching is a strength. During our learning walk, we saw some exceptionally strong practice, where pupils were highly engaged and articulating their sounds. Pupils were confident to have a go and the enthusiasm of the staff was highly contagious. Your leaders work closely with parents so they are able to further support their children at home.
- You also identified that the most able pupils in key stage 2 across all subjects were not making enough progress. Despite this being highlighted in the school's strategic plans, there is still little evidence in lessons and books that this group of pupils is being sufficiently challenged to reach greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You utilise the support of consultants in order to gain an external view of your work to further improve outcomes for pupils. Furthermore, being part of a multi-academy trust, you have been able to use more experienced leaders at all levels to support you as a new leader and your newly formed middle leadership team in order to share best practice. Although you are now a competent leader, there is still more work to be done to develop your middle leadership team to help you further improve pupils' progress and attainment.
- Pupils are keen to read, and the school is working hard to create a 'reading culture'. Pupils' confidence is also being developed by the school, encouraging a 'have a go' approach and providing events such as an author visit to enrich the curriculum and reading opportunities. Observing the pupils' engagement during one of these workshops showed that their enthusiasm was infectious and when spoken to they were keen to read more of his books.
- Pupils experience a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are given a number of responsible posts in school to help them develop their leadership skills ready for the next stage in their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders' knowledge and skills are further developed to ensure that they measure the impact of their actions and can identify the next steps for improvement
- the most able pupils are challenged in reading, writing and maths by teachers promptly identifying when pupils need more challenging tasks.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local academy committee, the chair of the board of directors and the chief executive officer, the director of education for the Diocese of Lichfield, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Brunt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer of the trust, a number of senior and middle leaders, the pastoral lead and chair of the local academy committee. I talked to a number of parents as they brought their children to school. I spoke with pupils during lessons and at lunchtime and listened to pupils read. I carried out a joint learning walk and book scrutiny with you. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. I looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, development planning, attendance records, information about pupils' achievement and documents relating to safeguarding. I evaluated the use of pupil premium funding and sports premium funding.