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Ms Nicki Deane  
Acting Headteacher  
St Matthew's Church of England Primary School and Nursery  
Mayo Avenue  
Bradford  
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Dear Ms Deane

### **Short inspection of St Matthew's Church of England Primary School and Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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. You began your post as deputy headteacher in September 2017 and soon became the acting headteacher following the substantive headteacher's long-term absence. You have made an impressive start in identifying the main priorities for improvement based on your accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have quickly set in place some new procedures to support you in checking on the effectiveness of teaching and learning and have engaged a wide range of leaders to assist you with this. This has enabled you to continue improving the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, which was an area for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have high expectations and have taken firm action to eradicate any teaching that is not up to standard. Additionally, the involvement of a range of leaders, many of whom have stepped up to the challenge of taking on new responsibilities, is creating greater capacity to speed up the rate of improvement even further.

The school is well supported by effective governance. The considered strategic response to managing a period of instability in the school's leadership has enabled the school to maintain a sharp focus on pupils' achievement while ensuring that new leaders receive the support and development they need. Governors are incredibly passionate about the school and work closely with school leaders to make sure that pupils have access to a high-quality education in an atmosphere which is warm and friendly. Pupils certainly do develop as well-mannered individuals who are proud to talk about their school and their learning. They appreciate the caring and

nurturing approach from staff and, in return, show respect and kindness to one another. Governors also provide sharp challenge. For example, intent on improving pupils' attendance, they were keen to seek out local examples of good practice. This has resulted in leaders introducing much more effective systems and strategies that are now contributing to the improving rates of attendance and punctuality seen recently.

At the last inspection, leaders were tasked with improving parental engagement. This is now an area of strength. Regular workshops and a wealth of guidance on the school's website are welcomed by parents and carers, who say that they now feel more able to support their children's learning at home. There are also more opportunities for parents to be involved in the school community. For example, they can take classes which sometimes lead to gaining a qualification or can participate in parent and toddler events. In recognition of leaders' commitment to improving parental engagement, the school has received an engaging families award and a leading parent partnership award.

The standards that pupils achieve are improving over time. By the end of early years, the proportion of children who reach a good level of development is now consistently in line with the national average. By the end of key stage 1, pupils' attainment reached national averages in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 and 2017. There has been less consistency in pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 2, but work in books shows that current pupils are making faster progress and more of them are working at an age-appropriate standard. However, you are aware of the task ahead and are clear about some of the most urgent requirements. For example, the assessment system is in the early stages of its implementation and is not yet providing you with an accurate enough picture of pupils' attainment and progress in each subject and year group.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The training that staff receive makes sure that they know how to recognise and respond to signs of concern. Effective systems are also in place for the recruitment of new staff.

The curriculum effectively develops pupils' understanding of potential dangers such as crossing roads, bullying and using the internet. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils also feel reassured that, should they have any concerns at all, staff in the enhancement room are available to provide them with individual support and guidance.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are acutely aware that, while pupils' progress in reading has been broadly average, attainment by the end of key stage 2 has been in the lowest 20% nationally for the last two years. Reading has consequently been a priority for

school improvement. Leaders' actions to ensure that pupils develop a love of reading have been very effective. Every time I spoke to pupils about their reading, their faces visibly lit up as they talked passionately about their favourite authors and the books they have enjoyed reading in class. Leaders have made sure that right from children's start in Nursery, books are central to the learning experience. As a result, children in Nursery are keen to look at books and tell each other familiar stories. This interest in reading develops as pupils progress through school. The recently introduced high-quality texts that are used as the basis of pupils' learning in English are proving to be thought provoking and enjoyable, and are supporting pupils' knowledge and understanding in other subjects. Leaders have prioritised training for staff in the teaching of reading. The effect of this can be seen in lessons and in pupils' books. Pupils are now readily accessing a range of more challenging question types. They demonstrate how they are able to justify their views and provide evidence from the text, summarise their answers, make predictions and ask their own questions about the texts they are studying. Leaders have also introduced additional activities and events such as storytelling week, author visits and competitions, which are helping to inspire pupils to read widely and often.

- Leaders' actions to improve the teaching of phonics have also been successful. The proportion of pupils meeting the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved over time and was in line with the national average for the first time in 2017. Children's books in Reception and key stage 1 show that they demonstrate an increasing awareness of using their phonics skills to write. They spell words using phonetically plausible attempts with increasing independence. However, in phonics lessons, there are some missed opportunities for teachers to make sure that pupils are using the correct letter formation. You also agreed that children in Reception would benefit from more planned opportunities to practise using their phonics skills at other times throughout the day.
- Leaders have a good awareness of individual pupils and identify those who may struggle to meet the expected standards. Gaps in learning are identified, for example through the screening that takes place for pupils who are new to learning English. Extra reading intervention then takes place so that every individual is given the chance to catch up as quickly as possible. However, you acknowledge that, at present, although these pupils are tracked individually, leaders are not checking on the progress made by vulnerable groups overall. This would support you in identifying which actions are proving most successful. Additionally, when listening to pupils read, it emerged that disadvantaged pupils who need to catch up struggle with the books they are reading as they are not well matched to their current phonics learning. This impedes their progress.
- A group of leaders scrutinised the work in pupils' books. This showed that they had a very clear understanding of the curriculum expectations for different age groups. They could demonstrate the progress pupils are making in reading and the positive effect the staff training is having on raising standards.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance and reduce frequent absences have resulted in much higher attendance rates in 2016/17 and so far this academic year. However, although rising, attendance is still below the national average. The improved systems and processes you have implemented are beginning to

become more established and consequently, this is speeding up the rate of improvement. For example, punctuality has improved dramatically following a new procedure that raises parents' awareness of the importance of making sure that their children arrive on time for school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the assessment system quickly becomes increasingly reliable so that leaders have a clear picture of pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school
- outcomes for vulnerable groups are carefully tracked to support leaders in checking on the impact of their actions and prioritising where further improvement is needed
- books are closely matched to pupils' phonics skills so that those in the earliest stages of reading are able to make even faster progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the acting assistant headteacher, and a range of other leaders. I also met with six members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, and I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records, and information about safeguarding. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. Together with you and a range of leaders, I scrutinised the work of a sample of pupils. I listened to four pupils read. I spoke with several parents and carers at the start of the school day and considered the eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with a group of pupils from a range of year groups and spoke with a group of teachers. I also took into consideration the 21 responses to the staff survey and the 49 responses to the pupil survey.