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Mrs Liz Whetham
Headteacher
Holy Trinity Primary School
A Church of England Academy
Savile Park Road
Halifax
West Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Whetham,

Short inspection of Holy Trinity Primary School, A Church of England Academy

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is marked by its openness, its focused use of high-quality information and, above all, its relentless ambition for all of its pupils. You have high expectations and you monitor the work of the school very closely. You and your team gather information about pupils' progress meticulously and very regularly. You check the accuracy of the information you gather with other schools in the area. You and your team of teachers use this information to carefully focus their teaching so that pupils make good and rapid progress. Middle leaders are a strength of the school. They work alongside you and the senior team in monitoring the quality of teaching and checking pupils' progress. Middle leaders are linked effectively with their phase or subject counterparts on the governing body.

The school's culture of high expectations is underpinned by a strong sense of moral purpose. This purpose is shared by all members of the school community. Pupils behave well, look out for each other and attendance is good. The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social understanding is very effective. The thoughtful, well-planned and reflective collective worship is a natural expression of this aspect of the school's work. Pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular and charity activities. They relish the opportunities that the school gives them to take on responsibilities as, for example, liturgy leaders, befrienders and members of the junior leadership team (JLT). They are very aware that service to others is a vital aspect of a healthy community, not only at school but beyond in the

wider community and the nation as a whole.

The overall quality of teaching is good. Staff display very good levels of knowledge and skill. Classrooms are happy, attractive places where learning moves at a crisp pace. Relationships are strong. Pupils are eager to learn and they rise to the generally consistent high expectations of staff across the school. Staff use focused questioning deftly to develop and deepen pupils' learning and understanding. Reading is a particular strength. The school offers a wide range of opportunities to read and enjoy books both in school and at home. Pupils spoke enthusiastically to me about their reading.

You have moved swiftly and effectively to address shortcomings in the quality of writing across the school. You have ensured that there are now more opportunities for pupils, especially the most able, to write at greater length. I saw clear evidence in pupils' books of longer pieces of writing. By writing at greater length pupils are deepening and extending their understanding. Because of the very detailed information that the school gathers about pupils' progress, staff are also giving pupils more focused and individual writing tasks. These tasks not only stretch and develop pupils' skills, they also give pupils more confidence and facility with the written word. Your emphasis on improving handwriting, spelling and punctuation is also improving pupils' skills in these vital areas. However, there is evidence that some least able pupils in key stage 1 are not yet able to form their letters confidently. As a result, they are not writing at sufficient length with sufficient control. You are aware of this and that there is still more to be done to ensure that writing across the school continues to improve. You are clear that pupils, especially in key stage 2, should have more opportunities to write at greater length in subjects other than English. Overall, it is clear that your focused and energetic approach is having a very positive effect on improving writing across the school.

The previous inspection report identified the need for governors to develop their skills in the interpretation of information so that they could hold leaders more rigorously to account for the performance of the school. You and the governing body have addressed this very well. Governors are ambitious, rigorous and meticulously well-informed. They take their roles very seriously and seek constantly to improve. They hone their skills through regular and effective training. They use a range of strategies to ensure that the judgements they make about the school's progress are drawn from a wide range of sources. They do not rely on you alone for their information. Each governor is linked to one of the sixteen classes at the school. They visit regularly. Governors are also linked with particular subjects and areas of the school's work such as safeguarding, English and religious education. Through this wide range of links and opportunities, governors have keen, realistic and detailed insights into the school's work. As a result, they fulfil their vital roles very effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are of high quality and very carefully kept.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. You, your staff and the governing body take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that regular and effective training is provided for all staff and governors. As a result, they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding. Your designated nurture officer has strong links with outside agencies. The school's records of its dealings with these agencies are detailed and show your meticulous approach to this vital work. You engage with the local authority promptly and follow up safeguarding issues tenaciously.

Inspection findings

- Children do well in early years. They settle in quickly. They are safe, happy and well cared for. This is because the recently appointed early years leader establishes clear and open links with parents. Staff are very well deployed. Communication between home and school is very good. There is also clear and detailed communication between early years at the school and other local providers. This means that children get off to a flying start at school. The learning environment, both inside and out, is attractive and forms a backdrop against which engaging learning and exploration take place. Staff are skilled in ensuring that children develop their independence as learners who enjoy exploring the world. There is a strong focus on spoken language through questioning and talking about what they are doing. Pupils talk a lot. They are eager to share ideas and the fun they have. This means that children develop and widen their vocabulary and are able to speak fluently about what they are doing.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has improved steadily over the last three years and is now very close to the national average. This is because the well-led staff use their detailed knowledge of what children can and cannot yet do to sharpen their planning and focus their teaching. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged and most-able children, who are making particularly good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Staff are skilled. Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations. I saw very effective use of questioning by staff in phonics sessions. For example, in one of these sessions, working seamlessly with the support staff, I saw the teacher using visual examples, sounds and careful questioning to help children identify particular letter sounds in the middle of words for themselves. A child was clearly delighted, and rightly so, when they suggested that the word 'motorbike' had a 't' sound in the middle. Through tactics such as these, staff are extending and deepening pupils' skills and delight in reading and word recognition.
- Most pupils make good progress through key stage 1. You make sure that staff use the information they gather through their monitoring of pupils' progress to focus their teaching on best meeting individual pupils' needs. You make sure this

happens through regular visits to classrooms by yourself and your leadership team and meetings with staff to discuss pupils' progress. As a result, the quality of teaching continues to improve. A scrutiny of key stage 1 pupils' books showed that they now have more opportunities to write at greater length. However, there is still more to be done. Evidence from books shows that some least-able pupils do not yet have sufficient control over the formation of their letters to be able to write confidently.

- There is clear evidence from this inspection that your focus on improving the quality of writing is having a positive impact on pupils' writing skills. A scrutiny of work in books across the school, but particularly in key stage 2, showed me that pupils are now regularly writing at greater length and making stronger progress. This is giving pupils, and especially the most able, more opportunities to deepen and extend their vocabulary, stamina and ideas. You are clear that there is still more to do, especially in providing more opportunities for pupils to write at greater length in subjects beyond English.
- During the inspection I saw many examples of staff using questioning to develop and extend pupils' learning. Staff humanely, but insistently, move pupils on in their learning by asking challenging questions that make them think. I also saw pupils using the attractive environment and 'learning wall' displays in the classrooms to find things out for themselves. Members of the JLT told me that they had played a key role, along with staff and governors, in developing effective displays across the school. You have ensured that classrooms are orderly, happy places where pupils make good and confident progress. This is because relationships between adults and pupils and pupils and pupils are respectful and kindly. As one pupil said to me, 'We know where the boundaries are.'
- The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is very effective. She works with staff and governors to monitor the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional funding is well spent. Expectations for these pupils are high. Staff are well trained and skilled in identifying strengths and building on them. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points. Relationships and communication with parents are good.
- You and governors carefully monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils. You ensure that through regular monitoring of these pupils' progress your staff move swiftly to remove, wherever possible, barriers to their learning. You, your staff and governors are dogged in your determination to ensure that disadvantaged pupils succeed and have access to the same learning and extra-curricular opportunities as their peers. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make generally good progress. You spend the additional funding for these pupils effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to strengthen the whole-school approaches to writing by further developing pupils' understanding of the links between what they are writing and its intended audience
- focus carefully on ensuring that pupils continue to gain in confidence and accuracy in the formation of letters and words, especially in key stage 1
- further extend and deepen the curriculum beyond English, mathematics and science, especially in upper key stage 2, so that pupils, and particularly those who are most able, have opportunities to write at greater length and develop and deepen their understanding of a wide range of subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited 12 classes to observe learning and, where appropriate, talk with pupils about their work and experience of school. I was accompanied by you or a member of your leadership team in the majority of these visits. I scrutinised a wide range of pupils' books and folders of work. I attended an act of worship on the subject of reverence. I spoke with you, governors, the SENCo and the safeguarding leader. I spoke with your school improvement adviser in person and with an officer from the diocese on the telephone. I observed and spoke informally with pupils at the start and end of the day and during break and lunchtime. I spoke with parents at the start of the day. I met with eight Year 5 pupils, formally, to discuss their views of the school. I also listened to, and discussed, reading with four Year 3 pupils. I took into account 41 text messages from parents and the views of 68 parents on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took into account the views of 41 staff and 107 pupils who responded to an online survey during the inspection. I read a range of documents about the school's progress, safeguarding systems, monitoring, staff training and governors' views.