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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Rachel Jewitt
Headteacher
St Matthew's School, Westminster
18 Old Pye Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 2DG

Dear Mrs Jewitt

Short inspection of St Matthew's School, Westminster

Following my visit to the school on 6 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 have addressed the key issues raised. For example, pupils know how to improve their work, and teachers adapt and reshape tasks during lessons so that all pupils make consistently swift progress.

You have ensured that the school continues to be a nurturing and caring environment. Pupils say that they enjoy being part of the St Matthew's community. They are thoughtful and attentive and told me that they like attending school because learning is fun. You ensure that pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and that they are polite and friendly. They understand and can explain the school core values of 'Belonging, Believing, Achieving'. Staff ensure that pupils who join the school during the year are welcomed and settle in well. Pupils enjoy getting certificates for their achievements, and enthuse about the many outings and visits that the school organises. The variety of extra-curricular clubs that pupils can choose, such as cooking, drama and football, promote their interests and are very popular. You have made sure that pupils learn a broad and balanced range of subjects, which includes Spanish.

Since the previous inspection, the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen sharply and rates of attendance are up. This is because you have set clear behavioural expectations and made the school an interesting and stimulating place, so that pupils want to attend.

Since the last inspection, the school has grown in size. Twenty-three new pupils

have joined key stages 1 or 2 since the academic year started in September. This is in addition to the pupils admitted at the start of the academic year. Some pupils enter with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. You, together with teachers, manage this well by ensuring that all pupils are given opportunities to catch up if needed. My observations of pupils' work in lessons and in their workbooks confirm the school's own progress information that new pupils are making good progress.

You have pressed forward with initiatives – for example in reading where a new reading scheme has been introduced, and in mathematics – which are showing clear and positive signs of impact on standards. We agreed that it would be beneficial to continue with these initiatives.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff support pupils' well-being meticulously. Leaders work with outside agencies and liaise with them quickly in order to secure strong support for pupils and their families. Leaders manage concerns sensitively and effectively. Staff have secure knowledge and understanding of current safeguarding guidance and procedures. Pre-employment checks on adults working at the school meet statutory requirements. Staff training is up to date and their safeguarding practice is effective. Governors carry out appropriate checks on safeguarding during the school year.

There is a culture of vigilance where pupils' welfare is actively promoted. Pupils are listened to, and they feel safe.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders are improving pupils' reading across the school, especially for the most able pupils. This was because you have rightly identified some variation in the performance of pupils in this area.
- Leaders have put in place new methods for improving pupils' engagement with reading. These include setting ambitious targets for pupils' reading and introducing parent workshops on how to support their child's reading. You have improved training for teachers on how to strengthen pupils' understanding and inference skills. Leaders have introduced a new reading scheme and book corners have been improved. Leaders have set clear and aspirational end-of-year expectations for all aspects of literacy, and regularly check to ensure that these new methods are effective.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what they read, and use this knowledge to answer challenging questions. This is evident in their books, by talking to pupils in classes and by hearing them read. Teachers now focus on broadening pupils' vocabulary with some notable results. As a result, pupils are able to use a wide range of vocabulary when describing key sections of the materials they read.

However, at times, the range of opportunities for pupils to share and discuss their learning using their improved vocabulary is limited.

- Reading and communication provision in the early years is effective for all groups of children, as well as the most able. Although there is clear evidence that some children enter school with below or well below nationally expected standards in reading, the school provides a strong start for all. As a result, the majority of pupils catch up and are ready for Year 1. By the end of Year 1, most pupils meet or exceed nationally expected standards in reading.
- The second line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders are raising standards in mathematics in key stage 2, and in the early years foundation stage. This is because available information shows that there has been some variation in the pupils' performance in mathematics over the past three years.
- Leaders have taken a range of steps which have raised standards in mathematics. These include a closer focus on the use of mathematical vocabulary in lessons and introducing parent workshops to help parents and carers support mathematics at home. Leaders support teachers by modelling good practice, including questioning skills, and in helping teachers to prepare ambitious plans and set higher expectations. All these steps have helped to raise the profile of mathematics throughout the school community and have raised standards.
- In lessons, teachers' skilful questions enable pupils to think deeply. Pupils are given very frequent opportunities to acquire and practise their mathematical vocabulary and solve problems. In their workbooks, pupils demonstrate their skills well. In discussions in Year 2, for example, pupils were able to confidently explain how to identify key vocabulary and how to solve challenges.
- In the early years, children demonstrate their enjoyment of counting and exploring numbers. Adults are quick to take opportunities to teach children new number skills while they are practising existing ones. The youngest children clearly make strong progress, from their records of learning and in observations of learning. Some children enter the school with very low levels of skills and knowledge in mathematics, and they catch up quickly.
- Although improved, you accept that there is still more to be done in the teaching and learning of reading comprehension for the most able and in the teaching of mathematics. You appreciate that the changes made need to be embedded, so that variation in performance is not repeated in the future.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the effective steps taken to raise mathematics for all groups and reading comprehension for the most able are sustained, so that pupils' progress continues to improve in these areas.
- the range of opportunities for pupils to share and discuss their learning using their improved vocabulary is increased.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Roberts
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector carried out the following activities during the inspection. He:

- held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and other leaders
- held a meeting with teachers who are new to the school
- held meetings with safeguarding leaders
- observed learning indoors and outdoors
- had a discussion with four governors
- had a discussion with a group of pupils
- observed a range of lessons, including mathematics and literacy
- evaluated the rates of pupils' progress by looking at workbooks and displays
- heard pupils reading
- evaluated recent information about children's progress
- considered the views of staff through looking at responses to Ofsted's online survey
- met a range of parents before school and considered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View.