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Mrs Joanne Burden
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Burden

Short inspection of Whitechapel Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 March 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the previous inspection, your school has undergone substantial changes to the senior leadership team and in governance, including a new chair of governors. You were promoted from the role of assistant headteacher to headteacher in September 2017. In addition, there have been several other changes in staffing. We agreed that I would investigate the effect of these changes during the inspection.

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have made a strong impression on governors, staff and pupils. The overwhelming majority of the community are pleased with the positive changes you have already put in place, including improving the flow of communication with parents and carers. Parents with whom I spoke informally are very positive about the work of the school in providing their children with a good education. Staff morale is high, reflecting their pride in working at the school. All staff agreed that leaders do all that they can to ensure that staff are respected, motivated and effective in their roles. As a result, they are collectively committed to improving the school further.

You have created a positive culture where you value and listen to every child. There is a strong sense of community and belonging for pupils and parents. Pupils spoke with confidence and maturity about the collective responsibilities they have to ensure that Whitechapel is a caring and friendly school. Pupils enjoy contributing to the whole-school community and take on numerous responsibilities, such as those of school councillors, eco-club warriors and gardeners. Pupils are knowledgeable about the need to take care of the environment. They spoke in great detail about the need to recycle

and reduce our overall use of plastic. In addition, pupils in each class get the opportunity to vote for a charity for which to fund raise. They undertake their responsibilities with boundless enthusiasm and confidence. As a consequence, these rich experiences help prepare pupils to be caring and responsible citizens.

Following the last inspection, leaders were challenged to ensure that the work set for pupils, particularly for children in the early years foundation stage and the most able, was set at the right level. Despite a dip in the outcomes for children at the end of early years in 2017, particularly in writing, indications are that more children are now making good progress and are on track to achieve standards expected for their age. Most-able pupils achieve above other pupils nationally at the end of key stages 1 and 2, but the difference is less marked in mathematics than in reading and writing. Nevertheless, you and your leaders for mathematics recognise this and have taken effective steps to improve the quality and breadth of the mathematics curriculum so that more pupils, including middle-ability pupils and the most able, make stronger progress. You acknowledge that more work is needed to ensure that more pupils are consistently challenged to achieve higher standards in mathematics.

Governors are committed to their roles and take an active interest in the school. They bring a range of helpful skills from their work backgrounds in safeguarding, education and the church to support and challenge leaders. The governing body knows the main strengths and weaknesses of the school because you share a wide range of information with governors. Governors make good use of this and also visit regularly to challenge the progress and actions in the school improvement plan. Although this plan identifies the most pressing priorities and strategies for improvement, more precise success measures would enable governors to check to what extent it is having the desired impact on pupils' progress.

The local authority knows the school well. It has worked closely with the school to challenge it over standards, particularly in mathematics. The school has welcomed and responded positively to this challenge. The local authority sees the school being fully capable of making forward strides and continuing to manage its own improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school takes its duty of care responsibilities very seriously. You and your deputy headteacher, as safeguarding leaders, have a firm grasp of roles and responsibilities and ensure that all policies and procedures are fit for purpose. You ensure that systems for the recruitment and induction of new staff, governors and volunteers are robust. As a consequence, all staff are well trained and act swiftly if they have concerns about a pupil. In addition, you work closely with external agencies and ensure that families receive timely support when this is needed.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and are taught to keep safe in a number of ways. They have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They say bullying is rare and have absolute confidence to turn to adults for help in resolving any issues, should they arise. The curriculum provides countless opportunities to support pupils in developing a sense of safety. Pupils are able to talk with confidence about the

merits and the dangers of the internet. Overall, the curriculum teaches pupils how to be safe in a range of different situations.

Inspection findings

- Children join early years with knowledge and abilities that are broadly typical for their age but sometimes lower in communication and language. Outcomes over time have been above average. However, in 2017, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was below that seen nationally. This was due to lower numbers of children, particularly boys, achieving the expected standard for their age in writing. You have been swift to tackle the temporary dip in children's performance. Your relentless focus on improving the teaching of writing indicates that higher proportions of children are on track to meet age-related expectations. However, we agreed that more work is required to ensure that children have a range of opportunities to apply their writing skills outdoors.
- In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieve the expected standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics has been variable across the school. In 2016 and 2017, disadvantaged pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 was lower than for other pupils nationally. You have been quick to address these shortfalls by tracking these pupils more carefully. The plan for spending the additional funding has been improved to target these pupils and cater for their needs. However, more disadvantaged pupils need to make greater progress across the curriculum to reduce the differences between them and other pupils nationally at the end of each key stage and by the time pupils leave the school.
- In 2016, pupils' attainment in mathematics by the time they left school was below average. Overall progress was also below average, particularly for middle-ability pupils. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard by the end of key stage 2 shot up considerably. As a result, progress improved to be in line with the national average. With your leaders of mathematics, you have identified areas requiring attention. Together, you have had a relentless focus on re-shaping the curriculum to ensure that more attention is paid to problem solving and reasoning. As a result, pupils get the opportunities to grapple with complex problems. The school's own progress information and evidence in books indicate that most of the current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making faster progress than last year. However, we agreed that opportunities to challenge middle-ability pupils and the most able are sometimes overlooked.
- On the whole, pupils' attendance since the previous inspection has been above rates seen nationally. You have rightly identified the need to ensure that all groups of pupils benefit from more frequent attendance. In recent years, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have had lower attendance than other pupils nationally. You monitor the attendance of all groups of pupils and vigorously promote the importance of attendance. As a result, this is paying dividends because the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved this year and is similar to that of other pupils nationally. There has been a modest increase for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, more work is needed to build on this positive start in order to bring attendance for this group in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children in early years continue to have opportunities to practise their writing skills, particularly outdoors, so that greater proportions reach a good level of development
- the number of disadvantaged pupils who reach both expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage improves to be closer to the national average
- pupils' progress in mathematics, including for middle-ability and the most able, accelerates, so that more achieve or exceed the standard expected for their age
- the attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities improves to reflect that of other pupils nationally
- the measures of success in the school improvement plan are sharpened so that leaders can better track the impact of actions on pupils' learning and progress across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Stillings
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders as well as members of your governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I spoke informally with parents at the start of the day. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I looked at pupils' workbooks in detail and listened to pupils read. I also spoke to pupils during lessons and listened to their views of the school.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation statement. Additionally, I considered information relating to pupils' progress and safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children. I took account of 130 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the free-text messaging service. In addition, I took account of 21 responses to the staff survey and 101 responses to the pupil survey.