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Mr Damian Tucker
Headteacher
St Lawrence Church of England Aided Junior School, East Molesey
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Dear Mr Tucker

Short inspection of St Lawrence Church of England Aided Junior School, East Molesey

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 November 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 not allowed the challenges of the recent construction of a new building to distract you from the school's core purpose. Consequently, pupils remain safe and happy, and are prepared very well for moving on to their secondary school education.

Pupils in your school are confident and articulate. At the start of the inspection day, they were keen to tell me how proud they are of their school, and how they enjoyed being able to watch it being re-built. Pupils conduct themselves very well in lessons and moving around the school, responding to adults' suitably high expectations for their behaviour with minimal prompting. They demonstrate an appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet and social media. They are encouraged to be increasingly independent, which helps them to be ready to face whatever challenges and difficult decisions may lie ahead. Almost all parents and carers who shared information with me were highly positive about the school, recognising staff's dedication to their children and the rich range of extra-curricular opportunities that help their children to flourish.

You and your senior leadership team work closely together, with a common sense of purpose and a quiet determination to keep improving the school. The middle leadership team that was newly in place at the time of the last inspection is now securely established, albeit with some members only recently in post. Collectively, leaders use a wide and appropriate range of monitoring activities to keep

themselves well informed about standards of teaching and learning in the school. This information is used well to direct training and support, and to hold staff to account for the difference their work is making to pupils' outcomes. Governors actively challenge leaders about the impact of their work, and demonstrate a shared and accurate understanding of the school's priorities. This reduces the risk of leaders becoming complacent about pupils' rates of progress when they reach above-average standards by the end of key stage 2.

Leaders make careful use of staff's expertise and time to provide extra help for those pupils who most need it. Parents are typically highly positive about how quickly staff recognise and respond to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Planned programmes of additional support are complemented effectively by opportunities to address gaps in learning as they arise. As a result, the less able pupils in the school are making secure progress that is helping them to catch up with their peers.

Pupils join the school with attainment that is typically above that of other pupils nationally. You acknowledge that, although their attainment by the end of Year 6 remains high, pupils' progress during key stage 2 is only broadly average, particularly in mathematics. Accelerating rates of progress, particularly for your middle-ability pupils and in mathematics, remains an ongoing focus for your school since the last inspection. While there is evidence of your work having some impact, particularly in reading, improvements in mathematics have required a careful re-think about what will lead effectively to sustained and suitably rapid progress over time. As such, some of your work in this area is in the relatively early stages. Similarly, you recognise that pupils do not always maintain their accurate use of spelling, punctuation and basic calculation skills when they are working on more complex tasks or applying their skills across the broader curriculum. This can limit their progress and attainment. Your determination and high expectations for pupils to get the basics right, so that they can achieve as well as possible, are clear.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff and governors are well tuned to their responsibilities around safeguarding. Leaders ensure that adults working in the school are suitably vetted, trained and supported to report and act on potential safeguarding concerns. Staff talk with confidence about what they do if they are worried about a child. Regular reminders about 'hot topics', such as signs of physical abuse, keep everyone focused on remaining vigilant, even though issues are thankfully rare. Staff trust leaders to take appropriate action, working with experts beyond the school where needed, to support children who may be vulnerable. Leaders keep careful records of issues that arise, which enables them to be suitably attentive in their approach.

Parents typically describe the school as a happy, safe environment, where staff give over and above what is required, so that pupils are very well cared for. Pupils value the 'worry boxes' that give them an easy way to share their concerns and get the help they need to sort them out. Governors keep a careful 'watching brief' on safeguarding arrangements, which ensures that these are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, as well as considering safeguarding arrangements, we focused on: how well teaching supports middle-ability learners and boys to make rapid progress; how effectively leaders ensure that pupils transfer their skills, knowledge and understanding across the breadth of the curriculum; and whether rates of progress, especially in mathematics, are better than in the past.
- Staff share a common understanding of how to accelerate pupils' progress, through meeting their learning needs more precisely than in the past. They use and share a range of helpful training to help them plan lessons that build successfully on pupils' learning over time. Consequently, progress for middle-ability learners, particularly in writing and mathematics, is improving, although some improvements are relatively recent. Boys and girls engage similarly in learning, and there are no discernible differences in the quality of their work.
- Leaders plan extra help carefully to supplement learning in lessons. Consequently, those who most need to catch up are supported well. Pupils benefit from a combination of planned programmes of additional learning and 'top-up' activities that deal promptly with misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge, skills or understanding. Middle leaders work closely with year teams to deploy resources, including additional adults, carefully and appropriately. As a result, pupils are less likely to fall behind, and any gaps in their learning are filled promptly.
- Leaders keep the wider curriculum under constant review. This ensures that it helps pupils to prepare well for their future learning, as well as meeting national curriculum requirements. Subject leaders ensure that teachers extend their focus beyond English and mathematics, through regular training, support and monitoring. Consequently, pupils access a rich and varied curriculum, which was evident in the quality and range of work in their subject exercise books.
- Staff expect pupils to work at similarly high standards across the whole of the curriculum. They build in opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge when writing or problem solving in other subjects. Pupils' use of reasoning and graphical skills in their science work and writing in a range of styles in religious education are examples of where this was seen during the inspection. We noted, though, that the accuracy of their spelling, punctuation and basic calculation skills is not always sustained as work in English, mathematics or the wider curriculum becomes more complex.
- In the past, pupils' progress in mathematics by the end of Year 6 has not been as secure as it has been in reading and writing. This was still the case in 2017, even though this was an area for improvement that was identified at the last inspection. In the past year, leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics across the school, building on techniques that many pupils have experienced in their infant school. Teachers recognise that this different way of working has helped them to deepen their understanding of how to enable pupils to learn mathematics successfully.
- Pupils approach mathematical problems thoughtfully, using their reasoning and problem-solving skills routinely. Teachers challenge pupils to explain their

thinking and to justify their responses to questions, which deepens their understanding. Consequently, pupils currently in the school are making more rapid progress than in the past. For example, in Years 4 and 6, approximately half of the pupils have made accelerated progress in mathematics this year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent changes to mathematics teaching build on initial improvements and lead to pupils making good progress throughout key stage 2
- pupils maintain their accurate use of spelling, punctuation and arithmetic as their work across the curriculum becomes more sophisticated.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your senior leadership team to discuss a range of issues, including the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding arrangements and the school's information about current pupils' progress. Together, we reviewed a small sample of pupils' work across the wider curriculum, and visited five lessons across a range of year groups. During these lesson visits, I looked at books and talked to pupils about their work, as well as observing the learning that was taking place.

I reviewed a range of other evidence available on the school's website and provided by your leadership team, including various policies and information about the curriculum. I met with groups of staff, pupils and governors, and spoke with the school improvement partner on the telephone. I also spoke informally with pupils and parents on the playground at the start of the day. I took into account 90 responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire, including 84 free-text comments. I also considered survey responses from 23 staff and 46 pupils in Years 5 and 6, and two emails from parents.