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Mr Martin Moriarty
Headteacher
St Luke's Church of England Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mr Moriarty

Short inspection of St Luke's Church of England Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 January 2019, 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.

After a period of considerable change within the leadership of the school, leaders have built a strong team that has markedly improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Prior to the new leadership, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment declined, which led to attainment and progress being lower than they should have been. Staff morale is high now, and all staff are committed to pupils reaching the highest levels of success. Every member of staff that completed the online staff survey reported that they enjoy working at the school. As a result, pupils' outcomes have improved. One parent commented that the changes made at the school since the start of last academic year have been 'miraculous'.

The school supports children to learn well. Staff and pupils value learning, and pupils support each other to achieve strong results across the school's broad curriculum. Pupils take pleasure in sharing each other's work and offer constructive criticism with honesty and sensitivity. In Year 6 music, for example, pupils in groups worked well composing music. They created high-quality musical pieces using glockenspiels, and carefully identified the strengths and weaknesses of each other's work. Teachers also effectively teach pupils how to plan improvements in their learning. Pupils speak articulately about what they are learning, and sensibly choose their next steps to improve. Pupils also work hard in lessons and enjoy the many challenges provided by their teachers. When teachers provide pupils with opportunities to choose levels of challenge, most pupils aim

for the hardest activities. As a result, pupils are making strong progress, particularly in Reception and key stage 1. For example, school assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils currently in Year 2 reaching the greater-depth standard in reading is nearly double that in 2018.

Pupils live up to the school's high expectations for behaviour. They are well mannered and considerate of the needs of others in lessons, on the playground and while moving around the school. Pupils report that, on the rare occasion someone misbehaves, teachers manage the situation well and it does not happen again. Teachers also effectively teach pupils how to help each other behave appropriately. One pupil commented that pupils in one class became friends with someone who was being unkind, and this stopped the unkind behaviour. The majority of respondents to Parent View – Ofsted's online questionnaire – agreed that the school makes sure that its pupils behave well.

Leaders have been effective in resolving the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Leaders have high aspirations for their staff and pupils and clearly communicate their expectations in well-considered improvement plans. Leaders – including governors – hold staff accountable for their work towards whole-school improvements. As a result, leaders and teachers have made substantial improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective in keeping children safe. Staff and governors place great importance on keeping children safe. All members of the governing body take responsibility – alongside the safeguarding governor – to check that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Governors regularly talk with pupils and parents and carers to make sure that they feel that pupils are safe at school. Staff are vigilant for safeguarding risks and signs of harm, and act appropriately when concerns arise. Staff also teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, for example with regular lessons about staying safe online.

Leaders carry out all the required checks to ensure that adults working with pupils are suitable. The record of these checks is carefully maintained and regularly checked by governors.

Inspection findings

- For this inspection, I looked at the actions leaders are taking to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. These pupils enjoy and value school and take part fully in the curriculum. In lessons, these pupils work hard. Because teachers are becoming more aware of the needs of these pupils, they are starting to make strong progress over time. Leaders hold teachers accountable for the progress of disadvantaged pupils and ensure that detailed plans are in place to support their learning. Should they fall behind, the extra support provided for these pupils is starting to help many of them to catch up.
- Leaders' support for disadvantaged pupils has not yet had the desired effect on

attainment across the school consistently. The attainment of these pupils in key stage 2 is not as high as in the younger years.

- I also considered the actions leaders are taking to improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Working closely with external specialists, leaders have improved their procedures to identify the needs of pupils with SEND and create support plans for these pupils. This has led to more effective use of additional funding and greater progress for these pupils. School assessment information shows that most pupils with SEND are now making strong progress over time.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils with SEND. Pupils benefit from carefully planned one-to-one support sessions that are well targeted to their needs. As a result, during these sessions, barriers faced by pupils with SEND are overcome so that these pupils can make strong progress in their learning.
- At times during teacher-led learning activities, some teaching assistants do too much of the work for pupils rather than supporting them to find their own solutions to difficult work and to check their own work for mistakes.
- Finally, I looked at the actions leaders are taking to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics. Pupils enjoy and benefit from the new approaches introduced in mathematics. As a result of leaders' chosen strategies in this subject, pupils are better able to apply their calculations to real-life problems.
- Pupils have a firm grasp on what they need to do to improve their learning in mathematics. Teachers' use of the 'support and practice' element of lessons effectively helps pupils to reflect on how well they are doing and choose their next steps to improve. As a result, pupils have greater confidence and the required skills to solve tricky reasoning problems. This ensures that pupils achieve well in mathematics. In 2018, attainment in mathematics for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 was above the national averages. Similarly, Year 6 progress in mathematics markedly improved in 2018 to be in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- well-considered support for disadvantaged pupils is consistently in place so that the majority attain the standards expected – or better – for their age
- teaching assistants support pupils to work independently in lessons and to check their own work carefully.

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

Yours sincerely

Al Mistrano
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, other members of the leadership team, members of the governing body, staff, pupils and parents. We observed learning and teaching in Years 1 to 6. With you and other members of your leadership team, I scrutinised pupils' work in English and mathematics and in their topic books.

I looked at a range of documents, including the records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, a sample of documentation regarding the provision for pupils with SEND, leaders' self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.

I considered the 69 responses to Parent View – the online questionnaire for parents – the 58 responses to the online pupil questionnaire and the 22 responses to the online staff questionnaire.