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Mrs Kathryn King
Executive Headteacher
St Matthew's Church of England Primary School
Mill Lane
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Dear Mrs King

Short inspection of St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since you took up the post of executive headteacher in January 2018, you have developed a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have addressed the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection effectively. You have used your detailed knowledge of pupils to create a well-focused school improvement plan, designed to maximise pupils' progress. These plans are known and understood by all staff and the governing body. While pupils' progress and attainment are broadly in line with national averages for reading and writing, you acknowledge that there is still work to be done to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics across the school. You are working closely with staff and governors to address this.

In this very small school, you and your team create a warm and welcoming environment where pupils feel safe and are valued as unique individuals. The staff, parents and carers and pupils describe the school as a family. One parent reflected the view of many when she commented that the school provides, 'a safe, caring and nurturing environment'. Relationships with parents have improved significantly from the previous inspection. You have ensured that parents feel a part of their children's education through the 'open-door' policy and, as a result, parents speak very highly of the school and the opportunities that their children are given. All of the parents who spoke to me during the inspection or who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's

online survey, said that they would recommend the school.

Pupils speak with confidence and say that they are proud to be members of the school. They can explain the importance of respect and responsibility, and relish the additional opportunities they have to represent these values. For example, they spoke enthusiastically about taking part in the Archbishop of York Community Project. Pupils work and play happily together and older pupils support younger pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes and as they move around the school. However, while pupils listen carefully in lessons, they do not take the initiative to further develop their understanding in lessons by, for example, asking questions or offering their own views without prompting.

Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils talk with interest about the books they have read and are proud when they have read challenging texts. Pupils have access to a wide range of books.

You have developed the role of your middle leaders and work closely with them to continue to improve the school. You are developing the staff well through carefully considered and appropriate professional development linked to the school improvement plan. The close link you have with Norwell School under The Kite Federation has led to stronger practice across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the safeguarding leader, you take the welfare of your pupils very seriously. All staff and governors have received the latest guidance on how to keep children safe in education, and they receive regular training. Staff know precisely what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. When you have a safeguarding concern about your pupils, you are quick to work with parents and carers and, where appropriate, with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that your safeguarding records are detailed. Governors closely monitor the safeguarding arrangements that you have made.

Pupils I met said that they feel safe in school. They told me that they learn to be safe in a range of circumstances, including when online. Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare. All of those I spoke with, or who responded to the pupil questionnaire, say that there are adults in school whom they can speak to if they are upset. Parents confirm that staff at the school care for their children well. A well-trained member of staff supports pupils where additional issues are identified. Pupils can talk about how the Rainbow group has helped them when they have had a problem, both in and out of school.

Inspection findings

- On this inspection, I looked closely at your work to improve pupils' progress in mathematics, explored the quality of the school's curriculum, and examined historical and current rates of pupils' attendance.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has not been as strong as in English. You have rightly identified this as a school priority and additional training has been provided for staff. You have also drawn on the expertise of staff at your partner school to support staff to improve their teaching. This is helping to raise pupils' attainment in this subject.
- The mathematics curriculum now has a focus on developing fluency and pupils gaining a deeper understanding by using a number of different methods to find an answer. Teaching in this subject is improving overall, as teachers provide pupils with time to practise these skills and intervene successfully when pupils struggle or require further clarification. However, on occasion, the challenge that teachers give to pupils in this subject and others does not move learning on or deepen understanding.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. You have reviewed your planning cycle to ensure that the topics engage the pupils in their learning. The key stage 2 topic, 'On the Move', has provided pupils with opportunities to think about big questions such as the impact of transport on the environment and asking whether or not 'people have got the power to create change'.
- As a result of your actions, pupils' overall attendance is greatly improved this year and is now close to the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is still well above the national average. This is having a negative impact on their progress.
- Pupils work hard in their lessons and are well supported by their teachers. They listen well and support each other in their learning. They are well mannered, willing to talk about their work and can explain what is expected of them. Teachers give the pupils opportunities to explain their findings to each other and they do this with confidence. Sometimes, however, they do not expect pupils to take responsibility for their own learning by, for example, encouraging them to ask questions independently, or requiring them to wait too long for support from staff. This means that pupils' progress, though good, is not always as strong as it could be.
- The governing body is made up of knowledgeable and experienced members who are committed to school improvement. Governors undertake regular visits to the school to check its work. The governing body provides you with effective support and challenge and has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. Governors are also clear about areas for improvement and monitor this closely. Pupils are at the heart of all their decisions.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' persistent absence is reduced, so that it is broadly in line with the national average
- teachers consistently provide sufficient and appropriate challenge for pupils, so that they make sustained and substantial progress across the curriculum
- pupils are provided with further with opportunities to take greater responsibility to lead their own learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Poole
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with parents at the start of the day and met with you and three representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors.

I met formally with a group of pupils from Years 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 and I also spoke with pupils when I observed their behaviour at breaktime. You and I visited both classes and examined pupils' mathematics books. In addition, I scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the single central register (the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff). I evaluated the school's documentation in relation to pupils' performance, school improvement planning, and pupils' behaviour and attendance. I took account of seven responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, the six responses to the Ofsted free-text service, five responses to the staff survey and 10 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey.