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Mrs Karen Willis
Headteacher
St James' Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Willis

Short inspection of St James' Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be a good school.

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

Leaders are ambitious for the pupils at the school. You have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for development. You continue to ensure that the school maintains its strengths and have introduced improvements where needed. As a result, there is a culture of improvement across the school. Pupils are positive about the quality of teaching they receive and would recommend the school to other pupils and parents. You and other leaders have placed a strong emphasis on strategic planning to ensure that priorities are clear. However, plans lack sufficient focus on identifying the impact that actions will have for pupils and their outcomes. You accept that clearly identifying the difference that you expect to see is a priority, so that you and governors will be able to monitor progress accurately.

You and senior leaders have effective systems for checking the quality of teaching to make sure pupils are learning well. You have emphasised to staff and pupils the importance of gaining the best possible key stage 1 and 2 results. You and leaders have worked hard to ensure that the curriculum provides the best opportunities for this to happen. As such, pupils are currently achieving well, most notably in reading. However, this information is not always readily available for evaluation and this is a focus for you and leaders.

The quality of teaching and assessment remains good because teachers plan stimulating and interesting lessons that engage pupils. Teachers provide a range of

opportunities for pupils to learn well, for example through the refined reading programme. As a result, pupils are reading more widely and often, which supports their language and communication skills. As a result of good teaching, pupils use expanded vocabulary and are confident when reading out loud. Teachers work effectively to lessen or remove pupils' barriers to learning. In this way, most pupils make good progress across a range of subjects.

Since the last inspection, the school has continued to focus on the areas for improvement. You acknowledge that while good progress has been made in this area, there is further work to be done. Your middle leadership team who share your vision, implement strategies to address the areas for improvement effectively. For example, alongside your senior leaders, middle leaders have developed a coherent strategy to focus on the teaching of reading. This is through a shared understanding of improvements in assessment so that pupils achieve well in this subject. You aim to strengthen this to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning improves so that pupils achieve well in all subjects.

Governors are very supportive of the work that leaders are doing to support pupils' learning. They make regular visits to the school and are keen for pupils to achieve well. They ask the correct questions when challenging school leaders. In this way, they are sufficiently effective in supporting the improvements across the school.

All parents and carers who responded to the online survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to other parents. They also said that they receive important information so that they know how well their children are doing.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leaders ensure that safeguarding is given the highest priority across the school. There are effective systems in place for checking the suitability of adults who work in the school. Governors regularly review the impact of the safeguarding policy.

Staff are provided with regular and appropriate training so that they know how to look after pupils well. Adults are vigilant and know what to do if they have any concerns. You and your leaders have made sure that the right amount of care and support is provided to pupils, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Pupils are taught how to look after themselves and know how to keep safe, including on the internet. They typically say that adults look after them well and keep them safe inside and outside of school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on three key lines of enquiry. The first was to evaluate the school's reading curriculum. Clear improvements have been seen in teaching across the curriculum. Since the previous inspection, staff have received guidance and training enabling them to support pupils to read more widely and often. In

this way, the quality of provision has improved because of the clear plan to focus on teaching of reading that is having a positive impact of current pupils' outcomes. However, you recognise this as an area that needs further improvement, so that all pupils continue to learn well.

- Pupils have access to a wide range of appropriate reading materials in their classrooms and in the library. Pupils find these engaging and interesting. Teachers use these stimulating reading materials routinely as part of their teaching in lessons. They create many opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence in reading. For example, when pupils were asked to read diary entries and make inferences from the texts, they could confidently summarise the passage and pick out important phrases from the books. Alongside this, staff use questioning to help pupils understand what they are learning, and they introduce new words to broaden pupils' vocabulary. As a result, most pupils currently progress well in reading.
- Leaders and staff are committed to teaching pupils early phonics skills on a regular basis. You and your leaders have placed emphasis on supporting staff in the teaching of phonics. This has meant that the activities provided to support these skills meet the needs of the children who are at the very earliest stages of identifying sounds in words.
- The second area of focus was the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in all subjects across the school. This was because the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 declined in 2018.
- This group of pupils are making good progress. In lessons, teachers focus effectively on the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to develop their self-confidence and take an active part in their learning, for example in developing their problem-solving skills. Teachers ensure that learning activities are closely matched to the needs of disadvantaged pupils. This helps to develop pupils' reasoning skills.
- The work in pupils' books also demonstrates that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress over time. You are determined that the progress they make matches that of other pupils in the school. The training programme developed to support staff has ensured that intervention provides the best help for all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged.
- The third area of focus was how effectively leaders use additional funds to improve pupils' achievement. This was to evaluate what leaders know about the impact of the curriculum on the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making.
- Senior leaders work with increasing consistency to promote good outcomes for pupils. For example, regular meetings with teachers follows a set agenda that focuses on pupils' progress. As a result, teachers have a clear understanding of which groups of pupils require more support and the actions needed to ensure this happens.
- Senior leaders and governors work closely together to evaluate the school's performance based on up-to-date information about the progress of pupils. Their evaluation is accurate and detailed. They identify whether particular groups are not achieving as well as others in the school. As a result, the priorities for further

improvement are clear and accurate.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategic planning identifies the intended impact of planned actions on pupils' progress and outcomes so that improvements can be monitored accurately
- senior leaders continue to provide support and challenge so that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, make accelerated progress in reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Ogugua Okolo-Angus
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you and governors about the school and the actions you are taking to improve it. I met with other senior leaders to discuss the work they are doing to improve reading across the school. I observed the work in lessons during learning walks, which took place across the school with some of your leadership team. During this time, a sample of pupils' work was reviewed as well as the systems for checking how well pupils are doing. I spoke with a group of pupils and heard them read. In addition to this, I analysed a range of school documents linked to the school's evaluation, safeguarding and improvement priorities. I looked at parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.