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Miss Pam Dryden
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Dryden

Short inspection of St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, the leadership team and the governors have shown a determination to provide the best for all pupils. Your evaluation of the strengths and areas needing further development is honest and accurate. Leaders at all levels know the school's priorities for improvement and their respective areas of accountability. You and other leaders are clear on the steps you are taking to address these priorities.

Leaders provide effective guidance, support and training for staff. They regularly check the difference their work is making to teaching and pupils' achievement. Subject leaders demonstrate secure knowledge of the areas they lead. They make full use of their deep subject knowledge to support teachers. This has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and learning overall.

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. They have reviewed the way mathematics is taught across the school. Teachers were trained to enable them to be better at probing pupils' understanding of the concepts they are learning in mathematics. As a result, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standards in 2017 and 2018 was above the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth in 2018 was also higher than in previous years.

Pupils are confident, articulate and courteous. Pupils I spoke to were unanimous in their praise for the school and of the support their teachers gave them. Pupils are kind to each other. During our discussion, the older pupils supported the younger ones to ensure that

they understood the questions I posed. The majority of pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey said that they would recommend the school to a friend moving to the area. Parents support this, and typical of their comments was: 'The school successfully drives a culture of belonging, nurturing, and growing.'

Governors have a secure understanding of your work. The governing body is a strong and effective team. Governors undertake a broad range of training and are regular visitors to the school. They work alongside leaders and local authority advisers to gather credible information necessary to offer sharp and timely challenge.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is seen at St Matthew's as being everyone's responsibility. Staff training is regular and continually updated in response to national and local issues. Governors and leaders ensure that checks on the suitability of staff are rigorous. They regularly commission external reviews to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding records are organised, detailed, and fit for purpose. Leaders and staff know pupils and families well. This enables them to identify safeguarding concerns at the earliest possible time. They work alongside external agencies effectively to ensure that pupils and families who are vulnerable are supported well.

Governors are clear about their responsibility to ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements remain robust and effective. They monitor these arrangements regularly during their school visits, and also when scrutinising reports they receive from leaders.

Pupils feel safe at school. They say that if they have any concerns or worries they know who to go to. They are adamant that bullying does not exist in their school and the one time that it happened, their teachers dealt with it promptly and effectively. During our discussion, pupils talked about how to keep themselves safe at home, at school, or when online. They talked about the many opportunities in the curriculum where they learn about road safety, stranger danger, and e-safety, for example.

Inspection findings

- During our initial discussion, we agreed to look at writing across the school. This was because in the past three years the progress pupils made, including disadvantaged pupils, was significantly below average. There were also fewer pupils in key stage 1 who achieved the expected standard in writing, compared to the national average in 2018. Leaders have identified writing as a priority and have invested in training leaders and teachers in driving improvements in this subject.
- Building on from strong outcomes in writing in the early years, pupils in key stage 1 engage in a wide range of activities to develop their skills. Teachers provide pupils with tasks which are aimed at developing their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. Pupils make strong progress in these areas of writing. However, pupils are not always able to use and apply these skills when writing extensively. As a result, they are not reaching the standards of which they are capable.

- In key stage 2, teachers provide pupils with plenty of opportunities to practise and consolidate their writing skills. They are able to write across a wide range of writing styles. They apply their spelling and grammar skills more accurately than before. Pupils find inspiration from the many reading books that are made available to them to improve their writing. Consequently, a higher proportion of pupils in key stage 2 are meeting the expected standards in writing. However, most-able pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, are not stretched and challenged enough to enable them to achieve the greater depth standards in writing.
- We also looked at mathematics in key stage 2. While there were improvements in this subject since the previous inspection, pupils' progress in mathematics in key stage 2 has been variable over the past three years.
- Leaders have put in place effective actions to ensure that the improvements they have secured in mathematics are sustained. Leaders have worked closely alongside teachers to further develop their subject knowledge. They have put in place a well-thought-out mathematics curriculum. Activities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts are carefully sequenced. Teachers ensure that pupils receive plenty of opportunities to practise and consolidate mathematical skills. As a result, pupils in key stage 2 make strong progress in mathematics.
- Additionally, teachers are effective at probing pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts they are learning. They use a variety of ways to check that pupils understand these concepts deeply and that they are good at applying them in different contexts. Pupils demonstrate good mathematical reasoning skills and a higher proportion of pupils achieve the greater depth standards in mathematics.
- Finally, we looked at the achievement of children in the early years. We wanted to see what accounts for the strong outcomes for children in this phase. This was because over the past three years the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development has been above the national average.
- This is an area of strength for the school. Effective leadership has secured strong outcomes for children in the early years. Leaders work effectively alongside families to ensure that children have the best start in their education.
- Leaders value the importance of developing children's early reading skills. They have put in place an effective phonics programme which children access right from the start. This, together with other approaches, has resulted in a very high proportion of children achieving the early learning goal in reading.
- Teachers and other staff prepare an environment which enables children in the early years to achieve well. Children move from one activity to another purposefully. During my visit to one of the classes, for example, a group of boys moved from the 'kitchen' to the writing area where they scribed what they did to bake a cake. They did this independently and they were able to write words accurately using their phonics knowledge.
- Staff are effective at intervening when necessary either to answer children's questions or to extend their thinking. Children make strong progress over time and a higher proportion of them achieve a good level of development than nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in key stage 1 use and apply their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills when writing extensively
- the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, in key stage 2 are challenged consistently well to enable them to achieve the greater depth standard in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Edison David
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I discussed the work of the school with you and with members of the senior leadership team. I spoke to pupils to discuss their experiences in lessons, the extent to which they feel safe, and their views on learning and behaviour. I held discussions with a representative of the local authority. I considered 170 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, 27 responses to the staff survey, and 49 responses to the pupil survey. I met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also considered documentation provided by the school and information posted on the school's website. I looked at the single central record of staff suitability checks, and the school's analysis of pupils' attendance and behaviour. Together with school leaders, I visited classes to observe learning and looked at samples of pupils' work across all subjects. I listened to pupils read from across the ability range.