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Ms Paula Walker
Headteacher
Christ Church School
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Camden
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Dear Ms Walker

Short inspection of Christ Church School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2017, 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your determined leadership has unified staff at all levels to sustain the rate of improvement necessary for pupils to make good progress in their learning. You have the strong support of an effective leadership team; leaders are precise in identifying strengths and weaknesses in their respective areas of responsibilities. As a result, the actions they put in place fulfil the needs of your pupils, thereby helping them to do as well as they can. Staff feel empowered and they are clear about their accountability for all pupils' learning. This clarity of purpose is shared by pupils, who are able to talk about where they are in their learning and what their learning goals are.

You have a deep understanding of the community you serve – you know each child extremely well, and you use this knowledge to support their progress and development. You tirelessly endeavour to improve the life chances of the pupils in your care, supported by the governing body.

Your school leaders have successfully created a caring and supportive environment where adults and pupils thrive. Parents and pupils alike speak highly of their commitment and leadership. Staff respond positively to the challenges they receive, evident in the consistent approach to teaching and learning across the school.

Pupils' learning behaviour is excellent and the ones I spoke to during the inspection were very aspirational. This is helped by their access to a wide range of activities outside the formal curriculum, including piano lessons and master classes for able mathematicians. They have also enjoyed being visited by the Mayor of Camden and sports personalities.

The previous inspection report identified the need to raise achievement in mathematics and improve boys' writing. The school has been successful in raising the achievement of most groups of pupils. However, 2016 national assessments showed that there is still work to be done to improve the rates of progress of some lower-attaining pupils in writing and the most able disadvantaged pupils in mathematics. This is why we agreed that these should be key lines of enquiry for this inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There is a strong culture in the school of keeping pupils safe and secure. Staff training is up to date. There is a sense of vigilance among staff at all levels, reflected in recorded concerns and incident sheets.

Pupils feel safe in school. They talk about the variety of ways available to them to express their concerns and worries. They say they can talk to a 'playground friend' or an older pupil identified by a badge awarded for displaying caring behaviour. They also talk about a 'letter box', where they can drop a letter containing any concern or worry. The school confirmed this is a self-referral system where pupils access the services of a counsellor. This has proven to be an effective avenue for identifying safeguarding concerns for some pupils. Pupils express confidence that they can talk to any member of staff, including yourself. This reflects your 'open door, approachable' policy.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to look at what the school has done to improve the quality of pupils' writing, focusing on the progress of particular groups. You have worked hard on this since the previous inspection. Teachers ensure that pupils write for an audience and for a purpose. This was seen, for example, in pupils' letters expressing their views on issues like climate change and the construction of HS2 (high-speed railway). You have developed teachers' skills when modelling writing for pupils. You have also improved teachers' and pupils' use of targets. In their books, pupils consistently demonstrate progress against the targets set for them, and use these targets to evaluate their own learning.
- In particular, pupils with low starting points now make rapid progress. Their writing has been enriched by preparatory activities involving vocabulary development, investigating genres and building literary skills. Such activities contribute to pupils' increasing competence in writing extendedly, using

sophisticated writing techniques and ambitious vocabulary. Teachers are also stretching and challenging the most able writers, enabling them to flourish.

- The teaching of mathematics and pupils' achievement in the subject have also improved considerably since the previous inspection. By the end of Year 6, pupils' progress is similar to the national average.
- The introduction of mathematics meetings has ensured that teachers provide additional focused time for pupils to work on weaker areas in mathematics. Middle leaders analyse pupils' performance in the national tests to ensure that teaching is addressing aspects that have been weaker in the past. In books, current pupils demonstrate good progress in mathematics over time. However, the school is not yet consistent in providing pupils with frequent and varied opportunities to consolidate mathematical skills and demonstrate mastery. In particular, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are not challenged and stretched enough to achieve greater depth in mathematics. Pupils agree that if there is any subject where they need more challenge, it would be mathematics.
- I also looked at the achievement of children in the early years, which has fluctuated in the past. Children join the Nursery or Reception class with attainment below that typical of their age. With a high proportion of children who speak English as an additional language, their language and communication development is lower than typically expected. Strong provision in the setting enables children to make rapid progress. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is increasing year on year.
- The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, supports children's vocabulary development and their understanding of number. Adults are well trained and their prompt intervention helps to consolidate and extend children's knowledge and skills. Records of observations of children's learning provide adults with information on their development that is used to plan activities to meet children's needs and interests.
- Finally, I focused on attendance and found that it has been improving year on year. You take a lead role in ensuring that pupils attend regularly and this has sent a clear message to the whole school community. When pupils' attendance has been less than good, you have worked with families and external agencies to remedy this. The progressive system of intervention you have put in place has secured attendance rates which are in line with national average. You have the support of the governing body and the local authority's education and welfare officers in implementing this system.
- School records show higher rates of absence on the part of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Persistent absence is often linked to children's medical needs. You have mitigated the adverse effect of this by liaising with family support workers and convening 'structured conversations' for learning provision to continue for the child despite absence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are provided with opportunities to demonstrate mastery in mathematics
- the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are stretched and challenged to achieve greater depth in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Edison David
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection.

- What actions have school leaders taken to ensure that more pupils, including those who need to catch up and those identified as most-able, make good progress and achieve higher standards in writing?
- What actions have school leaders taken to improve the attainment and progress of pupils, particularly of disadvantaged and most disadvantaged pupils, in mathematics?
- What accounts for the year-on-year variation in the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development in the early years foundation stage?
- How effectively do leaders address issues relating to pupils' attendance? What steps have leaders taken to improve the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities?

I carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection.

I discussed the work of the school with you, the two assistant headteachers, and with middle leaders. I also considered responses to Parent View and the paper copies of the survey sent to the school by parents. I met with a group of pupils to discuss their experiences in lessons, the extent to which they feel safe, and also their views on learning and behaviour in general. I held discussions with the local authority's representative, and a representative from the Diocese. I met with three governors, who were able to provide me with additional information. I also considered documentation provided by the school and information posted on the

school website. I looked at recruitment files, the single central record, and the analysis of pupils' attendance. With you, I visited all classes to observe learning and I undertook an extensive scrutiny of the work produced by pupils in writing and mathematics. I looked at children's learning profiles in both the Nursery and Reception classes. I listened to reading by pupils from across the ability range.