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5 July 2016

Simon Knowles
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Knowles

Short inspection of St Michael's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 June 2016, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school converted to an academy in 2013 and is now one of seven primary schools in a multi-academy trust. Since then, there have been significant changes to the school's leadership team. As you explained, you were appointed as interim executive headteacher of three of these primary schools in the Haringey local authority in 2014. In September 2015, you were appointed as the substantive executive headteacher. You have raised everyone's expectations for pupils' achievement and personal development. Your values reflect the trust's vision of 'Equality and excellence for all children in a Christian context'. This has created a sea change in culture. There is now greater accountability for all staff. They have fully embraced school improvement initiatives to improve the quality of their teaching still further. You have created a successful learning environment where everyone is motivated and keen to achieve their very best. Staff morale is high.

All three schools work exceptionally closely together. The assistant headteachers provide leadership for assessment and moderation, teaching standards and induction, as well as the curriculum and innovation across all three schools. Expertise, training and support are shared across the schools at all levels, providing strong capacity for rapid improvement. Consultants from the trust also provide effective professional development, including regular checks on the school's self-evaluation.

You, together with your team, have made good progress towards addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. There is now greater rigour and focus on tracking pupils' progress and attainment. Regular half-termly checks are carried out to identify those pupils who are at risk of underachieving. Strategies are put in place to boost their progress. This is speeding up progress, particularly in Reception, where in 2015 an above-average proportion of children achieved a good level of development. This rising trend is set to continue this year. Similarly, greater emphasis on the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has resulted in more pupils than average achieving the expected standard in Year 1. Pupils' phonics skills are starting to yield improvements in reading and writing standards in key stage 1. However, specific support to boost the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs or disability is not evaluated with precision to check on its effectiveness. As a result, gaps in achievement in some year groups are not closing quickly enough.

There has been a huge amount of work to develop accurate assessment procedures, so that you have a clear overview of both the school's effectiveness and of what pupils know and can do. The expertise and experience of the assistant headteachers, who are also moderators for the local authority, is used well. Moderations across all three schools and regular in-house checks, which are linked to the higher expectations of the new national curriculum, are beginning to secure greater accuracy of assessments. Staff have begun to compile examples of the new expectations to support their judgements of pupils' achievement. This has opened up professional dialogue between staff, resulting in better subject knowledge and confidence of teachers. While this is securing a rapid transformation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment overall, there remain some weaknesses, particularly in mathematics.

You have secured further improvements, most notably in pupils' behaviour, making sure that everyone takes full responsibility for pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning. You immediately disbanded the internal isolation room and provided support and training for teachers to be able to manage challenging behaviours effectively. From our joint observations in lessons and my discussions with pupils, it is clear that pupils take their learning seriously. Pupils are usually respectful and courteous. External exclusions and behaviour incidents have reduced significantly.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are detailed and of a high quality, following an external audit of safeguarding procedures. There are robust checks to ensure the suitability of adults who work with pupils. Pupils are supported well by adults and the playground buddies. The junior leaders reported that these pupils take care of others and provide mediation if there are any disputes or arguments. Pupils are taught how to keep safe online and about cyber bullying. Staff have been suitably trained and you have ensured that all staff are clear about their duties with regard to radicalisation and extremism. Directors of the trust monitor and

evaluate specific aspects of safeguarding on a rolling programme to make sure procedures are rigorous.

Inspection findings

- The capacity of senior leaders to secure improvements has been strengthened. The directors of the trust, and members of the local academy committee have supported you with determination and tenacity. They have taken decisive action to make sure that the school's performance has improved. This includes your appointment because you have a proven track record of transforming underperforming schools into institutions of success for all pupils.
- There have been significant changes in the quality of teaching. You have not shied away from giving some difficult messages to make sure that the quality of teaching improves. As a result, those teachers who are new to the school, and/or are new to the teaching profession, as well as experienced teachers, have risen to the challenges you have set in order to speed up pupils' progress.
- There is greater consistency in the feedback pupils receive from their teachers to improve their work. This is particularly so in writing, where pupils' next steps are clearly identified. There is an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to write for a purpose and with meaning in literacy and in other subjects. Pupils' writing achievements are celebrated in numerous displays around the school. These also serve as models of good writing. Year 3 pupils write about 'Bill's New Frock' eloquently and with a real sense of audience. The work to improve writing through the study of interesting texts is beginning to pay dividends.
- In mathematics, teachers do not routinely identify what pupils need to do to achieve well in their learning. Equally, feedback to pupils on what they need to work on next in this subject is not as effective as it is in writing. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics and in other subjects, especially in science.
- Work in pupils' books confirms that there is a real push to secure higher levels of attainment. In Reception, children wrote three-letter words in January and are now writing sentences with the correct punctuation and use of connectives.
- The new English leader has galvanised everyone to improve standards in reading. Pupils are encouraged to read more, through more regular guided reading sessions, and at home with their parents. The initiative which encourages pupils to read every day and talk every day, is proving to be a great success. Pupils love reading and they appreciate the rewards they receive for being the most voracious reader.
- Middle leaders now monitor the quality of teaching and learning through regular checks of pupils' work. Nonetheless, they are not held fully to account

for improving both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Targets for improvement are not focused sufficiently on these two aspects.

- School assessment information confirms that most pupils are on track to achieve at least age-related expectations in reading and mathematics, in most year groups. Attainment in writing is slightly lower than in reading and mathematics, notably in key stage 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability do not make as much progress as other pupils. The school has recognised these weaknesses and has appointed an inclusion teacher and a special educational needs leader who is also the head of school. Nonetheless, despite provision being put in place to support the achievement of these two groups of pupils, there is a lack of evaluation of their effectiveness and no measurable targets to make sure that any gaps in achievement close quickly. Furthermore, you and other leaders, including members of the trust, do not know if they are securing value for money with the additional funding for these pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and members of the trust should ensure that:

- middle leaders are set measurable targets linked to improvements in both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
- disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs or disability make as much progress as other pupils by measuring the impact of interventions regularly to check their effectiveness
- teachers identify precisely what pupils need to do to achieve the learning outcomes, and to provide greater clarity in pupils' next steps in learning in mathematics
- there are more opportunities for pupils to apply and deepen their mathematical knowledge and understanding, and to apply their reasoning skills in other subjects, especially in science.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector observed teaching and learning in all year groups. These observations were carried out jointly with the executive headteacher. Meetings were held with leaders, the chief executive officer for the multi-academy trust, and another director who is also chair of the local academy committee. A discussion was held with pupils who represent the school's 'junior leaders'. A number of documents were scrutinised including the school's own evaluation of its performance, those relating to arrangements for safeguarding, the school's plans for development and information about pupils' progress.