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Mrs Orlene Badu
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Badu

Short inspection of St Matthias Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2018, 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have successfully developed senior leaders and subject leaders alongside inducting those new to their roles. The school's partnership with other schools in the Primary Advantage Schools Federation has enabled staff to collaborate. This has developed new leaders and, in addition, enabled them to be effective in enhancing the provision in your own school. As a consequence, staff feel well supported in carrying out their roles and responsibilities so that all pupils have a positive experience at St Matthias.

High standards and a strong religious ethos permeate your school. Under your determined leadership, pupils and staff alike are committed to making the school as good as it can be, and removing any barriers that stand in the pupils' way.

Pupils enjoy being in their school. Their behaviour is very good. They are polite, kind and very respectful to each other. Pupils really enjoy playing imaginatively together in the well-developed outdoor areas. In lessons, they concentrate well and are very keen to find things out for themselves. One pupil commented: 'We are all different at this school, but we are treated the same, with love and respect.'

Governors know their school well and challenge school leaders effectively. For example, they ask probing questions and seek out the information they need to inform them about the progress pupils make. Governors provide a clear strategic direction for the school.

At the previous inspection, it was recommended that teaching should be improved by making learning interesting throughout all parts of each lesson, so that pupils remain fully engaged and ensuring that pupils' learning is not slowed by listening to explanations they already understand. A number of new leaders have been appointed since the last inspection and this new staff team has embraced the national curriculum and assessment changes. This has contributed significantly to the improved quality of teaching. The success of this is now evident in pupils' books. Staff now need to make effective use of the school's assessment system to ensure that they are planning their teaching so that all children make the best possible progress from their starting points.

In the last report, inspectors stated that the school should raise attainment in grammar, spelling and punctuation by implementing a teaching programme to develop these skills systematically across the school. In the most recent assessments in grammar, spelling and punctuation in Year 6, outcomes for all pupils were above the national average. This has been achieved by ensuring that training for all staff in the teaching of grammar, spelling and punctuation has been embedded across all subjects, in addition to English.

There have been recent notable improvements in the school's results in the Year 1 phonics screening check and in the national assessments at the end of Reception. In recent years, in all national assessments, the school's results have been in line with or above national averages. You now need to ensure that the presentation of work, as seen in pupils' books, is indicative of pupils' very positive attitudes to learning.

Parents hold you in high regard and appreciate your good communication with them; they feel extremely confident that, if they have concerns, you will listen and seek to resolve any issues promptly and to everyone's satisfaction. One parent commented: 'The school really cares about my child and, as a result, he is continuing to make excellent progress in managing his own behaviour and improving his learning.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is at the top of leaders' and governors' agendas at all times. Designated leaders and governors are well trained and up to date with regard to the guidance they receive. Leaders ensure that all staff are fully informed and are regularly trained in keeping children safe. Staff make referrals promptly and involve other agencies in a timely way, ensuring that records are kept safely and securely. Governors, too, are vigilant and know what to do to ensure that the school meets all its safeguarding requirements.

Proper checks on staff and other adults are made when they are recruited. These are well recorded and updated.

Pupils were unanimous in telling me that they felt safe in school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the internet, for example by not passing on personal information about themselves to strangers.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on evaluating leaders' actions in ensuring that pupils make better progress in reading between key stage 1 and key stage 2. This is because the school's most recent results show that pupils' achievement in reading was below the national average.
- You have raised the profile of reading across the school by reshaping and reinforcing common strategies to develop pupils' reading skills. Training and development for staff have enabled them to deliver reading strategies with greater expertise. Those at risk of falling behind are targeted for additional support, and appropriate material is used to stimulate their interest in reading.
- This was further evidenced when I listened to readers in Years 2 and 6. Pupils successfully acquire a range of age-related skills, which they apply to their reading. An example of this was that children in Year 2 were able to apply their phonics knowledge to sound out difficult words. As a result, pupils' performance in reading is improving.
- Next, I focused on evaluating leaders' actions to diminish the differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children in achieving good levels of development at the end of the early years. This was because disadvantaged children did not achieve as well as other children at the end of the Reception in 2017.
- Disadvantaged children are catching up quickly. This is because they receive a range of support that is designed to meet their individual learning needs. There are good links with parents. Staff ensure that parents are well informed and engaged in their children's learning, for example through contributing to the records of their children's achievement.
- Good teaching of phonics, both in specific sessions and through the teaching of early reading and writing, helps children to make good progress in using these skills.
- Finally, I checked current attendance rates because there was a high level of persistent absence last year. This is no longer the case and current attendance figures are above last year's national average. This is a result of you and other staff ensuring that there is regular monitoring of attendance data. Parents of pupils who are at risk of being persistent absentees are challenged and supported to ensure that their children attend school regularly.
- The range of activities and the curriculum that you and the staff provide mean that pupils enjoy their time in school and typically attend school regularly as a result.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment information is improved and refined by evaluating and tracking the impact of reading strategies

- the presentation of work in all books is improved so that it reflects the pupils' good attitudes to learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the executive headteacher of the Primary Advantage Schools Federation, the director of education for the Diocese of London and the director of children's services for Hackney. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Danvir Visvanathan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to the school improvement adviser and the executive headteacher, English leader and the early years leader. We visited classes together to observe teaching. I looked at pupils' work in books and spoke to pupils during lessons. I also spoke to pupils during lunchtime and then to a small group in the afternoon. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and considered the 79 responses to your survey on parents' views of the school.

I reviewed the school's self-evaluation documents, scrutinised the school improvement plan and priorities, and discussed with you how leaders monitor the quality and effectiveness of teaching. I scrutinised the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress, and the 2017 national test results. I listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read and checked current attendance rates. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.