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Ms Susan Lawrence
Headteacher
St Mary's CofE Primary School
Garnet Road
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Dear Ms Lawrence

Short inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 June 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 December 2012.

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 established a caring ethos with clear values that are understood and followed by staff and pupils alike. Pupils talk with passion about their school. One pupil, whose views were in agreement with other pupils, said, 'I love that teachers really understand what I am saying and listen to me always.' The personal development of pupils is supported well by the school. You use a range of successful strategies, including a counselling service, to provide effective support for pupils and families. Pupils told me that they are happy to share problems with the counselling service because it helps them.

You and the deputy headteacher accurately evaluate the school's overall effectiveness. Your plans for improvement are well targeted and identify accurately which aspects of the school's work should be even better. You choose strategies carefully, deciding to use research to help you to decide which will be the most effective. You have worked hard to ensure that staff feel well supported in what they need to do, in order to make sure that the quality of teaching is more consistent than in the past. Teachers notice quickly when pupils misunderstand new learning. However, teachers' questioning does not routinely challenge pupils to think hard and deepen their thinking. Strengths in mathematics and consistency in outcomes show that leaders are successfully securing improvement in the quality of teaching.

Leaders know pupils well and have worked with pupils to develop pride in their school and secure high aspirations. For example, after the last inspection, pupils

worked with staff to design a new school uniform. Pupils said that the uniform makes them feel smart and proud of their school. You and the leadership team check carefully pupils' progress and whether they are attaining the knowledge and skills expected for their age. You rightly recognise that there is a difference between the achievement of the most able, including the disadvantaged most able, and others nationally. You have put in place new approaches to teaching in order to diminish those differences.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff have received regular and appropriate safeguarding training that supports their understanding of the current statutory guidance. Clear processes are in place so that all staff know how to report any concerns. Leaders with specific responsibility carefully and swiftly follow up any issues. The school's records are detailed and of high quality.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that all staff have undergone appropriate checks to ensure that they are suitable to work in the school.

Pupils told me that they feel safe at school and parents agree. Pupils know who to go to if they have any concerns. They are taught well about how to stay safe on the internet and out of school. Pupils said that police teach them how to keep safe from harm. Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying. Although they said that it is rare, they know what to do if they experience any bullying and are confident to report it to a member of the school staff, who will help them.

Inspection findings

- Pupils made strong progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 in 2016. Although pupils made good progress overall in reading, progress for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, was not as strong. You and the leadership team were quick to identify this and have introduced a variety of strategies to secure improvements to reading outcomes, including new approaches to teaching pupils how to be successful readers. While pupils told me that lessons help them to understand the meaning of what they read better than before, sometimes, some additional questioning by teachers of the answers that pupils give would stretch their understanding further.
- We visited classes in key stage 1 and observed how pupils listen attentively to teachers' explanations of new letter sounds and enjoy reading unfamiliar words. Pupils use their knowledge of phonics effectively. Pupils that I heard read in Years 5 and 6 did so with confidence and expression. Pupils told me that they typically enjoy reading now far more than in the past.
- We looked at the school's recent assessment information, which suggests that pupils currently at the school are making stronger progress in reading. This is supported by inspection evidence.

- We considered how successfully you and your leaders support teachers in improving pupils' achievement in writing, in particular for the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils. In the past, the most able did not make as much progress in writing as they did in mathematics. You have developed the curriculum so that pupils practise writing in a range of subjects. For example, in science, pupils write accurately about their findings from investigations.
- Work in pupils' books shows that you have been particularly successful in developing pupils' neat and fluent handwriting. This helps pupils to routinely present their work neatly. Over time it is clear that pupils build up a wide range of vocabulary and use punctuation accurately.
- Teachers challenge the most able pupils to be ambitious in their use of vocabulary and to spell difficult words accurately. Most-able children in Reception classes build up writing skills quickly. Teachers challenge them regularly to write stories. The most able children write fluently and use full stops and capital letters with confidence.
- Although overall attendance rates are close to national averages, in recent years groups of pupils have had higher rates of persistent absence when compared to other pupils nationally, including disadvantaged pupils, boys, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You and your staff have worked hard this year to make the importance of regular attendance at school abundantly clear to the whole school community. As a result, you have been successful in reducing rates of persistent absence for these groups.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use questioning carefully to probe pupils' responses so that their learning is deepened and they better understand new learning, particularly in reading.

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 Brent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Lloyd
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out the following activities:

- held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher

- visited classes in key stages 1 and 2 with you
- looked at pupils' work in books
- talked to pupils about their learning
- heard pupils read in Years 5 and 6
- met two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body
- held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority
- spoke informally with pupils and staff
- examined a range of school documentation, including safeguarding records, school self-evaluation, school improvement plan, behaviour and exclusions information
- considered 27 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, and 20 responses to the staff survey.