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Mrs Louise Lovegrove
Headteacher
Trinity St Stephen Church of England Aided First School
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Dear Mrs Lovegrove

Short inspection of Trinity St Stephen Church of England Aided First School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up post in September 2013, you have built an effective team of leaders who reflect your determination to improve the school still further. You have created a good balance between the school's warm Christian character and improving and prioritising pupils' academic achievement. Consequently, there is a caring, positive and highly ambitious learning culture throughout the school, and all staff take collective responsibility for pupils' outcomes.

You use the talents of your senior leadership team skilfully to improve teaching, learning and assessment across the school, and so raise achievement. You have developed clear and strong plans for future improvement and act swiftly to address areas for development. All leaders articulate your shared vision very clearly and lead their areas of responsibility effectively. The vast majority of parents say that the school is well led and managed. For example, one parent said, 'The headteacher is proactive and approachable and leads parents, pupils and teachers appropriately and effectively with everything she does.'

You are supported well by a determined and skilled governing body. Governors work collectively to check thoroughly all aspects of the school. They provide rigorous levels of challenge to secure effective teaching and pupils' good progress, and ensure that the school improves further.

Pupils enjoy school. They feel valued and are fully involved in the life of the school, ensuring its values are promoted every day. They are proud of the part they play in acting out the school's values of 'friendship, compassion, trust, wisdom, fellowship and peace'. As a result, pupils make each other, staff and visitors feel respected and welcome. There is also a shared and tangible sense of pride, purpose and responsibility. Pupils appreciate the many exciting visits they undertake. For example, pupils were very excited to visit the 'Harry Potter' studios, as part of their literacy studies. Pupils say that their teachers make learning fun and interesting. For example, when asked what subjects they enjoyed, one pupil said, 'I like everything.'

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have ensured that learning opportunities now are typically challenging. As a result, pupils make rapid progress, including the most able pupils. This is especially the case in reading and mathematics. Despite this, you acknowledge that there is more to do to strengthen pupils' outcomes in writing, particularly their spelling. You have identified that pupils do not use their writing skills widely enough in different subjects.

You have also improved pupils' engagement with their learning. Pupils now respond positively to the many opportunities provided for them. They show good levels of resilience, persevere well with their tasks and relish challenging work, with or without adult support. A weakness identified in the last inspection was related to seeking the views of parents. This has been addressed successfully through regular opportunities for parents to give their views. The vast majority of parents are happy with the way you respond to their views. For example, one parent said, 'Even when I have disagreed about something, the school will listen and talk.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on all aspects of safeguarding and there is a strong culture of safety throughout the school's work. You and the governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of good quality. You and members of the staff team know pupils very well and are alert to any changes in their behaviour or circumstances which may be a concern. You act promptly to address any issues.

You, together with the other designated safeguarding lead, promote a strong culture of vigilance. Staff and governors receive effective and regular training to ensure that they have an up-to-date understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by pupils. Leaders and administrative staff keep a detailed record of the training that staff complete. You have established strong relationships with a range of professionals and external agencies, for example with the local authority.

Pupils behave very well and say that they feel very safe. They understand what bullying is and say that there is no bullying in this school. One pupil said, 'You can have an argument but I wouldn't call that bullying.' Pupils said that they would always go to a member of staff for support if they were worried about anything.

Pupils' comments were reinforced by parents' responses on Parent View, where 97% of respondents agreed that their 'child feels safe at this school'. The same proportion agreed that their 'child is well looked after'.

Inspection findings

- For this inspection, we agreed the main focus was on four areas of the school's work. I looked at: the attainment of the most able pupils in writing; the achievement of disadvantaged pupils; the impact of leaders' work to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance and reduce their persistent absence; and boys' attainment in writing.
- The English coordinator has successfully implemented actions that help the most able pupils to improve their writing skills quickly. She has provided effective coaching and support for other members of staff so that there is a consistent approach to learning. For example, teachers in all classes have placed a successful emphasis on extending pupils' vocabulary. This has helped to encourage pupils to write more accurately and adventurously. At times, however, pupils' spelling is weak and staff do not identify errors. This limits the quality of pupils' writing.
- The coordinator uses assessment information effectively to check that accurate judgements are made about pupils' attainment, progress and future learning needs. In addition, you have developed a strong and supportive local network of schools to work together to improve the teaching of writing. This is helping you to ensure that a higher proportion of the most able pupils are writing at greater depth than previously. However, opportunities for pupils to deepen their writing skills across the wider curriculum are limited. As a result, progress is not as fast as it could be.
- You make effective use of the additional funds the school receives to support the small number of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and the differences between their attainment and the attainment of other pupils is reducing quickly. You approach each pupil as an individual and make sure that the right support enables them to achieve well. For example, you ensure an effective combination of support during small-group work and help in whole-class lessons. Pupils are also helped by effective and clear introductions to new topics within English and mathematics. This is helping them to be well prepared for what they will learn next and to make rapid progress in key skills. You and the teachers track carefully disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment. This means that you and the staff spot very quickly if any pupils are falling behind.
- You have taken decisive action to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence. You have robust procedures in place to follow up on non-attendance and persistent absence and to encourage all pupils to attend regularly. There are regular and clear newsletters to remind parents about the importance of regular attendance. This academic year, disadvantaged pupils' overall attendance has improved and no disadvantaged pupils have been persistently absent.

- Leaders have taken well-directed action to remedy the lower attainment of boys in writing. Teachers, together with the English leader, have introduced activities to develop boys' punctuation skills rapidly, and to build confidence and writing stamina. Consequently, boys currently at the school are making good progress and achieving well. In our visits to classrooms, we could see how all pupils were being challenged to write well. Stimulating contexts inspire pupils to write and teachers capitalise on pupils' interest in topical themes, choosing contexts carefully to appeal to all pupils. Staff use their knowledge of pupils to target extra support. Teachers plan writing groups to focus on individual improvements. This is resulting in faster progress for boys who had not achieved as well as they should previously.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have more opportunities to write across the full curriculum so that they extend their writing skills
- teachers improve the quality of pupils' spelling throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of your senior leadership team. We discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements made since the previous inspection. Together, we observed pupils in classrooms and spoke to them about their learning. I analysed work in pupils' books from across the curriculum. I had meetings with four governors and a representative from the local authority. I also had a telephone conversation with an officer from the Diocese of Oxford.

I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance. I took account of the views expressed by 67 parents who completed the online survey, as well as their written comments. I also took account of a letter received from a parent and a communication from a parent to Ofsted.