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Ms Sonia McFarlane
Headteacher
St James's Hatcham Church of England Primary School
St James's
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Dear Ms McFarlane

Short inspection of St James's Hatcham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 November 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 and the deputy headteacher have a secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Together, you have implemented effective plans that address the next steps for improvement. Your focus on enabling all pupils to realise their potential has meant that the school has improved since the last inspection.

You and the senior team provide strong leadership. Your deputy headteacher supports you well in the effective monitoring and consistent delivery of a good quality of education. As a result, the strengths and weaknesses in teaching are accurately reported to governors. Governors recognise that they have become more confident in asking the right questions about the school's performance. They use the information they receive to challenge leaders with greater rigour at their strategic committee meetings.

This year there have been several changes to the leadership of the school. You have managed these changes effectively to ensure that leaders maintain their focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders work as a cohesive team and as a result, you have made good progress towards addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

In 2016, pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 2 was strong in reading and writing, with a greater proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards than their peers nationally. However, pupils' attainment in mathematics was not as strong as that found in English. You and your team are taking effective action to raise standards in mathematics so they are similar to those in reading and writing. My visits to lessons and work in pupils' books demonstrate that pupils are making good gains in their mathematical understanding. The school's assessment information suggests that pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. As a result, differences between pupils' attainment in English and mathematics are reducing. Nevertheless, there is still further work to do to ensure that pupils' achievement in mathematics is consistently as strong as in reading and writing, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

You have also ensured that pupils achieve well in key stage 1. You and your team have taken effective action to strengthen the teaching of phonics this year. As a result, school information suggests that a higher proportion of pupils are reaching the age-related standard in the national phonics screening check.

The parents and carers that I spoke to were highly complimentary about the school's work. They commented positively about your knowledge of their children and how accessible you are to talk to at the start and end of each day. They were also pleased with how staff kept them in touch with their children's learning and the additional classes provided after school and during the holidays. Many parents spoke about the good behaviour at the school. As one parent put it: 'The school is a happy, safe environment for our children and my daughter really enjoys going to school here.'

You and the governors have a comprehensive understanding of the factors that have led to increasing numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school at different times of the year. You have reviewed your attendance and punctuality procedures to safeguard pupils at risk of going missing from education. You also work effectively with parents to reduce disruption to their children's learning. As a result, many parents choose to travel longer distances to school rather than change their child's school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You ensure that the systems and procedures in place are continually reviewed and kept up to date, including training for staff and governors.

Your commitment to enabling pupils to do their very best, regardless of their circumstances, means their well-being and care are of a high quality. Staff raise any concerns promptly and leaders draw on advice from external agencies appropriately to safeguard vulnerable pupils. The checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are carried out with care and diligence. In addition, you commission regular safeguarding audits from the local authority to ensure that school procedures are continually reviewed and improved. For example, you have recently strengthened the procedures to safeguard pupils when they are absent from school. Governors are mindful of their statutory responsibilities. The designated safeguarding governor, and

other governors, attend regular training updates. This means that they are able to confidently hold leaders to account for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils.

The pupils that I spoke to told me that they are very happy at the school and they feel safe. They told me that the school teaches them to be safe and they know whom to go to if they are worried. Parents agree that their children are safe and well looked after in school.

Inspection findings

- You, your leaders and governors provide strong leadership to improve the quality of teaching. For example, leaders have successfully implemented a new approach to the teaching of phonics which is improving pupils' reading skills. Effective phonics teaching means that pupils are able to use their phonics skills correctly to read and sound out letters. For example, pupils in Year 2 confidently used their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. As a result, they read interesting books with enjoyment and expression. Pupils are given ample opportunities to self-correct their spelling of ambitious words and respond very positively to teachers' high expectations.
- Your current assessment information indicates that the proportion of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils meeting the required standard in the national phonics screening check has increased. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders agree that pupils' achievement in phonics needs to be consistent every year.
- In 2016, the proportion of Year 6 girls reaching the expected standard in the 2016 assessments was lower than for boys, at both key stages 1 and 2. I found that leaders are tackling this issue effectively. For example, you have prioritised ensuring that girls develop positive attitudes to learning and have high expectations of themselves. The school works closely with parents to help improve attendance to ensure that pupils attend school every day. As a result, your analysis shows that girls' attendance is typically in line with or better than national averages.
- Leaders have reviewed the content of the curriculum to ensure that it promotes the positive achievement of girls and raises their aspirations. Leaders monitor pupils' work and the quality of teaching well, particularly around the progress of girls. Girls that I spoke to confidently explained how changes to the curriculum were inspiring them in their learning. For example, one Year 6 pupil commented: 'I feel more confident, my teacher tells me my progress is better and what I need to do to improve.' Visits to lessons and work in pupils' books show that the proportion of girls achieving age-related standards is improving. As a result, differences between the attainment of boys and that of girls are diminishing. Leaders are ambitious for girls' achievement and are committed to raising standards further.

- You and your team have undertaken swift actions to improve the teaching of mathematics across the school. The implementation of the new curriculum is having a positive impact. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations and carefully planned lessons. I found that pupils are given demanding mathematical problems to solve and are keen to rise to the challenge. Pupils could explain their learning, the reason for the strategy they were using, and how this related to a real-life context. Improvements in mathematics teaching are in part due to the way leaders provide well-targeted support to help teachers develop their practice. For example, leaders with expertise in mathematics teaching share effective practice with other teachers. As a result, teachers are confident in planning learning that challenges pupils of all abilities.
- You have ensured that assessment information is accurate and used effectively to plan learning. Teachers are beginning to use this information effectively to intervene when pupils do not understand. However, leaders recognise that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards in mathematics remains below that for reading and writing. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. Recent improvements in mathematics teaching need to be embedded to ensure that all groups of pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, achieve to the very best of their abilities in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in mathematics teaching are sustained so that all groups of pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, achieve the standard of which they are capable
- assessment information is used strategically to pinpoint additional support for disadvantaged pupils so they make substantial progress in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Knowles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, as well as four members of the governing body. Together with leaders, I visited lessons and reviewed work in pupils' books. I spoke informally with parents before school and met two parents at their request as well as considering the 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents. I met with a group of pupils and also spoke to pupils during my visits to lessons and in the playground. I listened to individual pupils read from Years 2 and 6. I reviewed a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information about pupils' progress and attendance. Information related to safeguarding was also reviewed, including school records, policies and procedures and the single central record of recruitment checks. I scrutinised the school's website and confirmed that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.