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Ms Clare Sealy
Headteacher
St Matthias Church of England Primary School
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Dear Ms Sealy

Short inspection of St Matthias Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

St Matthias Primary School is a special place to be. You, your governors, staff and pupils have created a caring, friendly and outward-facing community. Together, you exemplify your school values of hope, thankfulness, responsibility, endurance and creativity. Pupils are confident, happy learners who take pride in their school and in their achievements. They greet visitors warmly and openly. They are respectful and polite to adults and to each other. They collaborate and learn well together, supporting and challenging each other to be successful with tasks set.

Leaders, staff and governors have worked tirelessly and highly effectively to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. As a result, pupils make strong progress and achieve well across a broad range of subjects. Outcomes have strengthened since the previous inspection.

Your approach to curriculum development is innovative and is having a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Displays celebrate a wide variety of beautiful work and achievements. For example, high-quality art work, written French work, history themes and literature reviews are inspiring and exemplify the very high standards

which are set for pupils at St Matthias.

Your work to develop guidance to pupils is helping them to be successful learners. Your success in this aspect of your work is valued and is helping other schools to reflect on their provision. You are generous in sharing the strong practice you exemplify. As a result, you are held in high esteem by the local authority, the diocese and by other local schools.

The majority of parents and carers who shared their views with Ofsted spoke highly of the school. Typical comments were that St Matthias is 'inclusive and inspiring' and that the teachers are 'caring and thoughtful'. This was clearly evident during my visit to the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The strong culture of safeguarding at St Matthias is clear. Leaders and staff care deeply about pupils' well-being. They are highly vigilant and well trained. Systems for recording safeguarding concerns and tracking actions taken are rigorous and records are kept meticulously. Leaders work well with a range of external services and with the local authority to ensure that vulnerable children and families get the support that they need.

Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training on radicalisation, extremism and female genital mutilation. They also keep well informed about local risks related to gang culture and knife crime. They use information from local secondary schools to keep a routine check on pupils in the school who have older siblings who may be vulnerable or at risk. Governors monitor the rigorous checks made by leaders prior to recruiting new staff.

Inspection findings

- Our first agreed focus was to consider how effective teachers are in helping the most able pupils to achieve well. This was an area for development identified at the last inspection. We looked specifically at the achievement of the most able disadvantaged pupils. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils who attain the higher standards at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has increased substantially. This is also true of disadvantaged pupils' achievement.
- During our visits to classrooms, we saw teaching which provided an effective level of challenge to pupils. Teachers have high expectations for what all pupils can achieve. For example, in mathematics, teachers offer additional 'chilli' challenges, which are tasks that are designed to stretch pupils and help them to deepen their understanding. Teachers typically give very clear guidance to pupils at the point of learning, so that pupils are in no doubt about what they need to do to succeed. They stimulate pupils' thinking and encourage them to discuss and challenge each other's reasoning. This was evident when key stage 2 pupils were discussing the Titanic and in a highly engaging mathematics lesson on capacity in key stage 1. In both these sessions, pupils were encouraged by adults

and each other to take risks, say what they thought, then refine their thinking.

- During the inspection, I looked at literacy, mathematics, science, religious education and topic books from each class. I found that the most able disadvantaged pupils have made strong progress this year in a range of subjects, and much of their work is above the standard expected for their age. The information provided by leaders about pupils' outcomes across the school supports this finding and shows that pupils in all year groups are achieving well. Any differences between the progress that disadvantaged pupils make and that of other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- Governors know and understand that pupil premium spending is having a positive impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. However, they do not share a precise enough understanding of the specific impact of the range of strategies, resources and interventions which have been secured through the funding. They recognise that a more rigorous approach to evaluating this impact would help them to enhance their challenge and support role even further. Governors are highly committed and reflective. They add strong capacity to the leadership team.
- We next agreed to review the progress that children make in the early years. This was because the proportion of children meeting expectations for their age by the end of the Reception Year in 2017 was below average.
- Inspection evidence shows that the information gathered by teachers to assess children's knowledge and skills when they start school is accurate. Children start with skills and knowledge which are below those typical for their age. Children's 'learning journeys' show that they make strong progress. The school's information shows that their progress is tracked accurately and effectively by teachers and practitioners.
- During our visits to the early years, we observed staff giving a sharp focus to developing children's early language skills and vocabulary. Calm, nurturing relationships are evident between children and adults. The indoor and outdoor spaces reflect all areas of learning well. Leaders have a clear and accurate view of how to enhance provision further. Practitioners value greatly the support that they receive from leaders to develop their skills.
- Finally, we considered how well subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics are taught and how well teachers are supported by leaders to chart pupils' achievements in other subjects. Inspection evidence shows that the curriculum is a key strength of the school. Leaders are developing innovative practice across all subject areas and are ensuring that reading, writing and mathematics skills are being applied effectively within other subjects. Pupils benefit greatly from specialist art and French language teaching. Outcomes in these subjects are excellent. Your approach to ensuring that key skills in subject areas are taught specifically is impressive. Pupils are developing skills which they can transfer to different content and themes. This is helping them develop the skills which will serve them well in the next stage of their education. Topics selected inspire and motivate pupils. Good-quality literature and information texts are used to enhance topic work. All learning is underpinned by talk which is demonstrated by teachers and developed by pupils. Interesting classroom

activities are having a positive impact on pupils' confidence with language and their ability to articulate their learning, particularly those who speak English as an additional language.

- Currently, pupils' progress within all subjects is not assessed with the same rigour as it is in reading, writing, mathematics and science. You and your leaders have prioritised the need to assess progress in a consistent way across all the subjects that you teach. You are taking effective steps to ensure that staff will be equipped to pinpoint any underachievement and provide support as required.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems for assessing pupils' progress are extended to include the full range of subjects taught within the school's curriculum
- governors routinely and precisely evaluate the impact of the pupil premium spending on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

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 Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Dollner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, governors, senior and middle leaders, and representatives from the diocese and the local authority. I visited all classrooms with you to observe and talk to pupils about their learning. I reviewed samples of pupils' books and assessment information to evaluate their outcomes over time. A range of safeguarding documentation was reviewed, including records of child protection concerns and the single central record of vetting checks on staff. I considered the views of parents through informal discussions and the 20 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the school's most recent parent survey.