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Mrs K Morris
Headteacher
St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Heaton Chapel
Wellington Road North
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Dear Mrs Morris

Short inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Heaton Chapel

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 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 April 2014.

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 highly effective senior leadership team that ensures that there is consistency in provision between the two new school sites. You are to be commended on not only maintaining but improving outcomes for pupils, given the expansion of the school and the growth in numbers.

There is a welcoming and happy atmosphere at your school. The Christian ethos is evident in the way that pupils respect each other and the way that staff conduct themselves. Pupils consistently display good manners, are polite and are keen to speak to visitors about their learning. The culture ensures that pupils have a voice and make positive contributions to school systems and procedures. This was noticeable in the way that pupils were involved in designing the new school site. As a result, they are full of pride for their school and appreciate the opportunities and responsibilities that they are given.

Governors know the school well and hold you to account for the impact of your actions. They make good use of their professional skills to ask challenging and probing questions. Throughout their work, governors aim to ensure that pupils succeed academically across the curriculum. This is evident in the importance they place on subjects such as music and modern foreign languages. The local authority provides support at an appropriate level as the adviser knows the school's strengths and areas for development well.

Parents and carers are supportive. The majority of responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were positive and parents I spoke to were enthusiastic about the school and its staff. Pupils are proud to be part of the school. One pupil commented, 'We have lots of people from different faiths and countries in our school. When new pupils arrive, it gives us a chance to make new friends.'

Following the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils are able to improve their own work and are consistently engaged in all aspects of their learning. This has been dealt with effectively. You have an effective programme of checks on the quality of teaching and learning. You are reflective in your practice and proactive in making changes where necessary. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and pupils are making even stronger progress. You were also asked to make pupils aware of their responsibility to improve their work. Pupils now have ownership of their learning. This is evident in the way that pupils work well together, supporting each other's learning through quality discussions.

During the inspection, we discussed areas where further work is required to support your school improvement. You have successfully fine-tuned your assessment system so that you can precisely track progress in English and mathematics over time. However, we agreed that the assessment system does not currently give an accurate enough picture of progress in other subjects. We also agreed that the presentation of pupils' work could be further developed. This will ensure that the good quality of presentation in English is reflected across the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You record all safeguarding concerns thoroughly and you respond promptly, following up concerns with outside agencies when required.

Governors and staff receive regular and detailed training to ensure that they have a thorough and up-to-date understanding of safeguarding issues. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils say that they feel very safe and know that adults will respond reassuringly and effectively to any concerns they have. Pupils understand the different types of bullying that exist and say that there are few such incidents in school. Pupils told me that they know how to stay safe, including when they are on the internet.

Inspection findings

- We agreed several areas of focus for this inspection. The first of these was the actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes for boys across the school. You had already identified this as an issue and your work to ensure that boys and girls achieve equally well is effective. In early years, teachers use a range of strategies to ensure that boys are fully engaged. For example, boys were enthused by the superhero challenges, optimizing their learning opportunities. All children receive quality teaching that systematically develops their knowledge and skills, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. You ensure that teachers plan work for boys that provides the right

level of challenge to match their abilities, especially in English and mathematics.

- In key stages 1 and 2, teachers plan effectively to engage boys and girls equally well. This ensures that gaps in progress are identified and learning matched accordingly. Achievement meetings allow teachers and other staff to gain a better awareness of the year-group expectations. This allows them to make adaptations to planning so that tasks are more precisely matched to individual and group needs. The recent improvements in your assessment system provide a useful basis to allow the monitoring of progress for all pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The boys I spoke to during the inspection enjoy school and are proud of their work. They showed deep concentration and engagement in their learning, especially in mathematics. Assessment information and progress in pupils' books also shows that boys make good progress from their starting points and that the differences in outcomes are diminishing between boys and girls. However, over the course of the inspection, it became apparent that to strengthen all pupils' work further there is a need to embed the recent strategies for improving presentation skills in English across the curriculum.
- The next area we looked at was how you are improving outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The new special educational needs coordinator has revised the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and correctly identified where improvements were needed. The governors monitor these strategies closely to ensure that they are having a direct and positive impact on the outcomes for pupils. You and your staff regularly hold review meetings so the quality of provision can be assessed for its effectiveness. Teachers and other staff demonstrate high expectations of what pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities can achieve. They set challenging targets accordingly. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The final area we looked at was how you are improving attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. New systems have allowed you to effectively monitor the attendance of pupils and provide support where needed. Processes and procedures are used well by staff. They involve other professionals, such as education welfare support from the local authority, when appropriate. Leaders effectively follow up pupils' absence and parents are held to account. Teachers create a welcoming environment that encourages pupils to attend school regularly. The attendance of pupils has improved and persistent absence is declining.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further develop the assessment system to ensure that the monitoring of progress in other subjects is as effective as it is in English and mathematics so that standards continue to rise
- they embed the recent strategies for improving presentation skills in English across the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of education

for the Diocese of Manchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stockport. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Throughout the inspection I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I held meetings with you and with senior staff to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I also looked at work in pupils' books.

I reviewed documentation which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered 185 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I also considered the 33 responses to the online staff questionnaire and the 214 responses to the pupils' online questionnaire.

I visited classes along with you to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I also met with the school's advisor from the local authority.

I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation documentation, action plans and other policies. I looked at safeguarding, evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep children safe, including while they are online. I also scrutinised your recruitment checks and record-keeping.