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Miss Devina Shryane
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Dear Miss Shryane

Short inspection of St Clement's Church of England Academy

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In September 2018, you took up the post of headteacher after being deputy headteacher at the school for the past two years. You, senior leaders and staff are committed to providing a safe and caring environment for pupils so that they thrive personally, socially and academically. Together you have worked successfully to build strong and positive relationships with parents. As a result, pupils enjoy school and parents are happy with the quality of education that their children receive.

Pupils are polite, friendly and well behaved. In lessons, they display positive attitudes to learning and listen carefully to teachers' explanations. They settle quickly to tasks and take pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils appreciate the care and support they receive and say that adults are helpful and teach them well.

The curriculum supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development successfully. Pupils learn about a range of faiths and cultures and make regular visits to places of worship to deepen their understanding of different religions. Trips, visitors and 'themed' weeks are used to enhance pupils' learning, along with a weekly enrichment afternoon in which pupils take part in a breadth of activities such as yoga, musical theatre and textiles.

Leaders have made progress in addressing the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and positive, which

develops pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem well. In lessons, pupils work cooperatively with their peers and are keen to answer questions. The roles of prefect and 'children's champion' give pupils the opportunity to have a say in decisions that affect them, for example the school's meals menu. Pupils regularly show visitors around the school and take turns to lead collective worship. All of the pupils spoken to during the inspection were confident and articulate. They expressed their views clearly and were keen to share their work. Pupils use their mathematics skills to gather and analyse data in science lessons. However, pupils' use of mathematics in other subjects is underdeveloped.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be even better. They have correctly identified key priorities for improvement and undertake thorough checks to ensure that their actions are making a difference. However, leaders' evaluations do not focus sufficiently on pupils' progress over time, which means that some pupils are not achieving as well as they should.

Leaders provide strong support for staff's well-being. As a result, staff morale is high. The multi-academy trust (MAT) provides effective support to develop the skills of leaders and teachers. Staff benefit from high-quality training and the opportunity to share ideas and learn from good practice in other schools. For example, the trust-wide 'the will and the skill' project is successfully encouraging pupils to read for pleasure. Moderation across early years settings within the MAT supports staff in making accurate assessments of children's learning.

The local academy board is committed to the success of the school and to ensuring that it sits at the heart of the local community. They have the necessary skills and expertise to support and challenge leaders and work closely with the MAT to hold leaders to account for school improvement. However, the MAT and the local academy board do not make thorough enough checks on the progress that pupils are making. Consequently, they think that pupils are achieving better than they are, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders give pupils' welfare high priority and the culture of safeguarding is strong across the school. Staff receive pertinent training, which means that they have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and are vigilant to the potential risks that pupils might face, including radicalisation and extremism. They report concerns promptly and leaders respond with care and attention to detail. Leaders make the appropriate checks on staff and governors to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children.

The well-trained and highly-skilled pastoral team has a thorough understanding of the community the school serves. This gives them a full and accurate picture of the challenges and risks that pupils face on a daily basis. Leaders use this knowledge to provide strong and tailored support for pupils and their families, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They keep detailed records and

routinely review these to ensure that their actions are successful in keeping pupils safe.

Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that staff will listen and respond if they need help. Pupils told me about the 'inside out' slips they can use if they have a concern and do not feel confident to approach an adult directly. Pupils understand what bullying is and say that it sometimes happens. Those spoken to during the inspection had mixed views about how effectively staff deal with this. However, leaders' records show that they take swift and appropriate action when incidents occur.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Visiting speakers such as the school nurse and the police help pupils to learn how to manage risks they may face in the local community, for example smoking, drugs and knife crime. Pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet, including playing games offline and not sharing photographs and their personal details.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to look at how well leaders are using the pupil premium funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress in writing has been below other pupils nationally for the past two years. Their achievement in mathematics has also been below that of their peers during this time. This is because, until very recently, leaders, governors and the MAT have not targeted the pupil premium funding precisely enough to ensure that this group of pupils makes strong enough progress.
- Leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of disadvantaged pupils, for example poor language skills and limited experiences outside school. They provide effective support for pupils' personal, social and emotional development, which means that pupils make strong gains in these areas. The newly appointed headteacher is aware that disadvantaged pupils need more tailored academic support and has already made changes to teaching. However, it is too soon to determine the difference that these changes are making to these pupils' outcomes.
- My second line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders are monitoring and developing the quality of teaching in writing in key stage 2 so that all pupils make the progress they should.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in writing at the end of key stage 2 has been below national averages for the past two years. Leaders have rightly identified that pupils' spelling and handwriting need to improve. Since September, they have taken effective action to address this, including the implementation of a structured spelling plan across the school and raising teachers' expectations of pupils' letter formation and handwriting. There has been significant improvement in pupils' handwriting in all classes. Pupils now form their letters correctly, and in key stage 2 most pupils join their handwriting fluently. Teachers routinely

address pupils' spelling errors in their work. There is some improvement in pupils' spelling, but due to weaknesses in the teaching of spelling in the past, pupils still have a way to go to catch up with where they should be.

- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and provide helpful feedback to teachers to improve their practice. Low-attaining pupils make strong progress in their use of vocabulary. They write in increasingly complex sentences and use a range of age-appropriate punctuation. However, teachers' expectations of middle- and high-attaining pupils are not high enough and many of these pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- My third line of enquiry was to find out how well the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 is developing pupils' fluency in calculation and their ability to reason and solve problems, particularly girls and the most able pupils.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been average for the past two years. High-attaining pupils have not achieved as well as those nationally. Girls have made less progress than boys. Because of this, leaders have identified mathematics as an improvement priority. They have reflected on how mathematics is taught and have increased opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding through reasoning and problem-solving. A focus on the use of practical resources means that pupils use equipment such as cubes to support their learning well.
- Work in books shows that pupils of all abilities are making secure progress in developing their calculation skills. There is no discernible difference between the progress of boys and girls. However, work lacks challenge for middle- and high-attaining pupils. These pupils spend too long completing work they can already do, and teachers do not adapt their teaching in lessons sufficiently when pupils are finding tasks too easy. Although there are more opportunities for pupils to reason and solve problems, this is not yet the case across all classes.
- My fourth line of enquiry was to investigate how effective leaders' actions have been in reducing pupils' absence and persistent absence.
- Over the past three years, pupils' absence has increased, and in 2017 it was above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are frequently absent from school has also increased and was well above the national average in 2017. Leaders are aware of this and have put in place effective strategies to improve attendance. The pastoral manager monitors pupils' attendance meticulously and follows up absence swiftly. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly. As a result, persistent absence showed considerable improvement in 2018. Pupils' overall attendance has risen this term and is higher than it was at the same time last year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupil premium funding is used and monitored effectively to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress, particularly in writing and mathematics

- teachers plan work that better challenges middle- and high-attaining pupils so that they achieve the high standards of which they are capable
- pupils' spelling continues to improve
- monitoring of pupils' progress is refined so that leaders, governors and the MAT know if pupils are making the progress they should.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the English and mathematics subject leaders and the pastoral manager. I met with the chair of the local academy board and two governors. I also held a telephone conversation with the chief executive of the multi-academy trust. I observed pupils' learning in seven parts of lessons with the headteacher. I looked at pupils' work in lessons and examined pupils' English and mathematics books with senior leaders. I also looked at pupils' work in science and topic books. I talked to pupils in lessons and met with a group of ten pupils from across the school. I examined a range of documentation, including information relating to current pupils' attainment and progress, the school development plan and leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised a range of safeguarding documents. I considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into account the four responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.