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25 April 2018

Mrs Ruth Town
Headteacher
St Michael-in-the-Hamlet Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Town

Short inspection of St Michael-in-the-Hamlet Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 April 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 June 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 provide strong leadership and a clear sense of direction for your school. You receive good support from a dedicated team of senior and middle leaders who work effectively together. You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your school improvement plan focuses on the right priorities, particularly the need to improve results at the end of early years and key stage 1.

The governors are knowledgeable and highly committed. Through regular visits to lessons and careful analysis of data, they keep themselves well informed about developments in the school. They provide you and your staff with the right balance of support and challenge. The governors make effective use of the additional funding to develop physical education and sports and to support disadvantaged pupils. The progress made by your disadvantaged pupils has been average or above for the last four years.

Staff morale is high. All the parents who spoke to me and the great majority of those who completed the questionnaire, Parent View, hold the school in high regard. They repeatedly highlighted the way that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are included in all aspects of school life. They were also impressed by the concern that you and your colleagues have for pupils' personal and emotional welfare, as well as their academic development. Your curriculum is planned well and enriched by a wide range of out-of-school activities. You place considerable emphasis on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain and teaching them about the

major religions of the world. However, pupils do not visit places of worship other than Christian churches.

In the last inspection, pupils received high praise for their behaviour. This continues to be very good. The pupils relate well to each other, to adults and visitors. I was impressed by the polite, confident and articulate way that pupils of a wide range of ages and abilities engaged me in conversations about their work and their experiences of the school. They welcome the many opportunities to contribute to the leadership of the school, for example as prefects, 'buddies' and members of the school council.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teaching challenges the most able; that pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work; and that work in books is well presented. You have addressed each of these areas successfully. For the last four years, the progress made by most-able pupils has been consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, the proportions of most-able pupils reaching and exceeding expected standards at the end of key stage 2 were above average in each of these subjects.

Your new assessment system provides pupils with regular feedback on how well they are progressing and identifies precisely what they need to do to improve further. The presentation of work in books is generally good. I was impressed by the progress that children in the early years are making in writing. In the best instances, the pupils had written extended pieces about dinosaurs, using a wide range of words which they could spell correctly and write very legibly.

Safeguarding is effective.

All the parents who spoke to me or who responded to the online questionnaire said that children are safe at the school. The same was true of the staff who completed the online survey.

All the pupils I spoke to said that they are happy and safe at school. They know how to keep themselves safe on roads, near railway lines and near water. Regular practices mean that they know what to do in the case of a fire. Pupils understand the potential dangers of using the internet or social media and what to do if they encounter any unsuitable material. They know which staff to contact if they have any worries or concerns and are confident that they will receive any necessary help. Bullying happens occasionally but is dealt with promptly. The views of this group reflected those of the pupils who responded to the online questionnaire.

The school site is secure and access to the buildings is carefully controlled. Staff and governors have received the required training on safeguarding and there are appropriate mechanisms to check on the suitability of staff to work with children.

You work closely and effectively with a range of appropriate agencies to support pupils and families who need additional help. However, the local authorities responsible for the children looked after who attend your school do not consistently provide you with the support you need to ensure continuity in these pupils' education.

Inspection findings

- Results in the early years have been below average in recent years. I was interested to know the reasons for this, what you are doing to bring about improvement and how well children currently at the school are doing. You showed me that, since the last inspection, increasing numbers of children have been entering the school with abilities below those typical for three-year-olds. Although they make clear progress during their time in early years, they do not reach national averages by the time they move to key stage 1. You have made improvements in this area a key priority for your school and, over the last two years, you have worked with a local university and external consultants to review your approach to teaching and learning in the early years. You have focused particularly on improving the performance of boys and vulnerable groups. Your figures show that the strategies you have adopted are leading to improvement. The children currently in the early years are further ahead than their counterparts at this time last year and boys' performance has improved dramatically. Therefore, although the proportions reaching a good level of development are still below the national average, they are now much closer to that average.
- Another area that I explored with you was pupils' progress in phonics. Results in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have fluctuated over the last four years and were below average in 2017. Your figures show that, as in the early years, current performance remains below the most recent national average but is considerably better than at this time last year.
- A third area that I discussed with you was pupils' performance in key stage 1. This has been below average for the last three years, with results in 2016 being particularly disappointing. As part of your strategy to address this issue, you have set up a nurture group to provide additional support for pupils, especially the high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. My visit to this provision showed that the pupils were responding well to their teachers and making good progress. You are also working with a consultant to increase the progress of the most able pupils in this age group. You were able to demonstrate that the progress made by pupils currently in Year 2 has clearly increased, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The standards of attainment reached by eleven-year-olds have fluctuated over the last four years. In 2017, they were above average in reading, writing, science and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. In mathematics, they were average. On the other hand, the progress made by pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils, has been generally above average for the last four years. I wanted to know whether this positive picture is being maintained. You provided convincing evidence that this is the case. One reason for this is the way that you provide timely and targeted support for pupils who have underperformed in the past. For example, you are placing additional emphasis on pupils currently in Year 4, to help compensate for their particularly disappointing performance at the end of key stage 1. Through your new assessment system, you are able to demonstrate the improvement made by these pupils.

- In 2015, your pupils' attendance was lower than the national average. For disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities it was in the lowest 10% nationally. The following year, attendance improved and for the last two years has been better than the national average. I was interested to know whether this improvement is being maintained. Your figures for the last two terms show that this is the case and that the revised strategies you introduced to reduce absence have been successful. You monitor the attendance of any child educated off site daily. You knew the precise whereabouts of each child who was absent on the day of the inspection.
- From the information on your website, I was not entirely clear how you organise your curriculum. Therefore, I asked your middle leaders to explain this to me. They were able to demonstrate that the school covers the whole national curriculum and that there are clear systems to ensure continuity and development in teaching and learning within each subject.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they are unremitting in demanding that the local authorities, responsible for the children looked after who are placed at the school, fulfil all their obligations in relation to the education of those pupils
- pupils visit the places of worship of a wide range of faiths, in order to prepare them further for life in modern Britain.

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

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I examined a range of documentation and discussed your self-evaluation with you and senior colleagues. I met the chair of the governing body and six governors and spoke to a local authority representative. I discussed the curriculum with subject coordinators. You and I visited lessons to observe teaching and look at books. I discussed behaviour, attendance and safeguarding with you and the deputy headteacher. I met seven pupils, chosen at random from key stage 2. I examined the 40 responses to the pupil survey, the 88 responses to Parent View and the seven responses to the staff survey. I spoke to 24 parents and took account of communications by phone and letter from other parents.