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Mrs Amanda Seager
Headteacher
Trinity Church of England First School
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Dear Mrs Seager

Short inspection of Trinity Church of England First School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 November 2013.

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 governors have a clear vision for the school which is shared by leaders at all levels. This, combined with a strong drive for improvement, has ensured that the school has improved quickly following a dip in its performance since the previous inspection. Teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes are good.

You have an acute understanding of the strengths of the school and areas that require further work. You are working determinedly on the right aspects for improvement. For example, in 2017, the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check declined to below the national average. You have wasted no time in analysing the inconsistencies in phonics teaching. You have reorganised the way phonics is taught across the school and this work is proving successful in remedying previous weaknesses.

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. Almost every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, reported that they would recommend it. The vast majority of parents say that children make good progress.

Pupils are polite. They are keen to learn and most display exemplary attitudes to learning. Your work to bring together the school's ethos and school values this term is enabling pupils to talk about resilience and their drive to do well in their learning, and also to make connections with the wider community and world of work.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the outside learning environment in the early years to raise children's achievement further. This work is effective. Children's achievement has risen steadily across a number of years. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is now above the national average. Teaching in the early years encompasses a full range of learning, inside and outside.

You were also asked to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics. This work has only been achieved in part. Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are good and are now above the national average. However, disadvantaged pupils do less well than other pupils nationally in mathematics. In some classes, teaching does not enable pupils to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems or reason in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff training is up to date and in line with current legislation. Staff talk with confidence about how they apply their training to ensure that they are doing all they can to keep pupils safe and minimise pupils' risk of harm.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding are assiduous in their record-keeping. They work closely with external agencies and follow up any concerns swiftly and with thoroughness to assure themselves that everything is being done to minimise risk. Governors assure themselves that the single central record is meticulously kept and meets requirements through their regular compliance checks.

Pupils feel safe in school and say they know how to keep safe. Parents agree. Every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their child is safe in school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the impact of leaders' actions to ensure that phonics teaching is consistently good so that pupils are able to use and apply their phonics skills so they can read and spell accurately. All staff have been retrained in the school's agreed teaching methods this year.
- The teaching of phonics is increasingly good. The school's approach combines teaching decoding to read accurately, comprehension skills to improve pupils' understanding of what they read, and pupils' ability to write in sentences and apply their phonics skills to spell accurately. As a result of this thorough approach to teaching, most pupils in Year 2 who did not meet the required standard in the phonics screening check last year have already caught up. However, teachers' and adults' assessments in a small number of teaching groups are not consistently precise. So, a few Year 1 pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Leaders' checks have not yet remedied this weakness. Pupils' writing in Years 2, 3 and 4 is increasingly accurate as a result of overt teaching and application of phonics and spelling skills in writing.

- Another aspect I examined was how successfully leaders and governors have ensured that disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Years 3 and 4. This is because these pupils did not make consistently good progress when they were in key stage 1.
- Leaders and governors are sharply focused on improving disadvantaged pupils' progress this year. The recently appointed 'disadvantaged learner champion' and 'link governor' role is providing close monitoring of the school's work to accelerate pupils' progress and ensure that any gaps in pupils' learning are filled quickly.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from a range of support and intervention in reading. As a result of the good teaching they receive, pupils read with increasing accuracy and are catching up well. Across the school, these pupils are writing with increasing stamina. However, some pupils do not yet apply their writing skills with the sophistication and detail required to meet and exceed the standards expected for their age. Current teaching is beginning to remedy this weakness. However, you know that there is more to do to enable disadvantaged pupils, who have previously underachieved, to catch up rapidly in their writing development.
- Pupils' mathematics books show that disadvantaged pupils are developing the fluency and calculation strategies well. However, there is insufficient teaching on problem solving and reasoning in some classes. This restricts the progress that pupils make overall.
- Another aspect I looked at was the extent to which leaders have been successful in minimising pupils' absence and ensuring that persistent absenteeism is reduced. Pupils' attendance is improving gradually. It is in line with the national average. However, there are still too many pupils who do not attend school regularly enough. Many of these are disadvantaged pupils. Leaders identify that they have not yet prioritised improving the attendance of this group of pupils with sufficient rigour.
- I also looked at provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Many of these pupils make strong progress from their starting points as a result of the intervention sessions and good-quality teaching they receive. However, on occasion, withdrawal from class lessons means that these pupils miss important learning. This restricts these pupils' access to a broad curriculum and hinders the progress they make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils attend well and make rapid progress, so that they catch up and meet the standards expected for their age in writing and mathematics
- pupils in all year groups use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems and reason in mathematics with confidence

- leaders' checks on teaching ensure that the provision for all groups of pupils is monitored, including for those who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that pupils' progress is consistently good from their different starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, other school leaders and three governors. I also met with a representative from Somerset local authority. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I looked at pupils' workbooks in detail and listened to pupils read. I also talked to pupils in lessons and listened to their views of the school.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, development plans and school performance information. I also looked at monitoring records for teaching, learning and assessment, your analysis of pupils' attendance, and behaviour and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 52 responses to the Parent View online survey, and the free-text messaging service. I gathered the views of staff through an online questionnaire and through discussions during the inspection.