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Mr Charles Applegate
Headteacher
St Mark's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Applegate

Short inspection of St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2018 with Debra Anderson, Ofsted Inspector, 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. Since starting in September, you have wasted no time: developing staff, gaining the trust and respect of parents and carers, and galvanising a strong and ambitious leadership team. Your efforts to improve pupils' attitudes to learning have been impressive and successful. Pupils across the school embody the new learning behaviours of creativity, curiosity, pride, responsibility, risk-taking, teamwork and resilience. Parents appreciate the great start you have made, one summarising the thoughts of many saying, 'Mr Applegate has been a fantastic addition to the school.'

The governing body recently restructured to concentrate its efforts on the standards of teaching and learning in the school. Leaders at all levels are regularly invited to present information to governors who ask probing questions, holding leaders to account for their actions. Governors are well informed and evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They, rightly, note that plans for the spending of pupil premium funding are not sharply focused enough on the needs of disadvantaged pupils in order to accelerate their progress.

In class, pupils are proud, happy and industrious. They take great care to present their work to the highest standard using, at your insistence, sharp pencils to carefully space their dates, titles and work. Pupils listen carefully to adults and show great respect for their peers. They enjoy the range of responsibilities they can take on. For example 'rights, respect and responsibility' ambassadors help to form class

charters and encourage others to think about the consequences of their actions. Pupils told me that they always consider if their words are 'true, useful, kind or helpful' before they speak. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute significantly to the joyful and harmonious ethos which is palpable throughout the school.

The curriculum is interesting and planned carefully to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils in Year 3 learned about the human body, plotting their own anatomical diagrams and explaining how different organs interact. Pupils in Year 6 attend a week-long residential trip and develop their team-building skills through raft-building, climbing and archery. Pupils record their ideas and findings in great detail, drawing on their strong English skills. Standards in English, science and foundation subjects are high. However, pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics have weaknesses which you are taking steps to address.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the resourced provision. The 'Bridge' resourced provision is now highly effective at supporting pupils who have complex social, emotional and mental health needs. The assistant headteacher has a strong vision for the centre and uses this to offer staff clear direction and effective professional development. For example, staff have received training to help them better identify pupils' specific needs and adapt work to meet these. Staff in the provision are cohesive and supportive, and use their strong links with the main school to help pupils reintegrate back into mainstream education.

Safeguarding is effective.

Systems for safeguarding pupils are well maintained and fit for purpose. Statutory checks are made, and reviewed by governors, before new staff commence employment. All staff receive regular update training to ensure that they are able to effectively identify pupils who need help. When concerns arise, leaders work with families and external agencies to get pupils the support they need.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. All pupils learn about online safety and know to avoid unsolicited contact from strangers. Pupils say they all have an adult in school they can trust and talk to if they are worried. Parents value the regular safety updates in the school newsletter and the workshops in school that help them keep their children safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the progress of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in mathematics; how effectively leaders evaluate and improve the school; and how well leaders support staff to improve their practice.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make strong progress in mathematics because teachers assess their needs and understanding accurately. When pupils find work too hard, teachers notice this quickly and, working with the skilled team of learning support assistants, offer helpful support to get pupils

back on track. In mathematics, all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, use their secure calculation skills to solve increasingly complex problems. Leaders, rightly, recognise that pupils need to develop their reasoning skills to improve their mathematics further.

- Since starting in September, you have worked with your senior team to evaluate every aspect of the school. You have liaised closely with staff and the local authority to create meaningful plans for improvement. The governing body monitors these plans closely, gathering useful, first-hand evidence to satisfy governors that the school is moving in the right direction. Leaders and governors are well placed to secure further improvement in the school.
- In September, you embarked on a challenging and ambitious programme of staff development. You, rightly, noted that in order to maximise progress teachers had to set work at the right level for the pupils. Teachers and support staff received useful training in assessment which helps them to set, evaluate and adapt tasks that are closely aligned to pupils' starting points. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved throughout the school. Middle leaders receive valuable support to improve their skills and understanding. They have shadowed senior colleagues, worked with successful leaders in other schools and received training from the local authority to improve their practice. The school continues to improve apace.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are routinely taught to reason in mathematics
- plans for additional pupil premium funding are refined so that pupils' barriers are effectively identified and addressed.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, senior and middle leaders, and three governors, including the chair. We observed learning in 14 classes, all jointly with senior leaders. Together we looked at pupils' work. I analysed a range of the school's documentation including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and

safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered 103 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. I scrutinised the results of Ofsted's pupils' survey and gathered the views of other pupils throughout the day.