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Dear Miss Hoy,

Short inspection of Trinity St Mary's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Woodham Ferrers

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Although the school has recently experienced a difficult period in leadership, you have stepped up to the role of acting headteacher while also continuing as a class teacher. The support you have received from an external consultant, governors and the senior leaders of the school has enabled the school to effectively address the school's priorities for improvement, with minimum disruption to pupils' learning.

Since the previous inspection there has been a strong focus on developing pupils' writing skills. Pupils' writing is now celebrated widely around the school, is beautifully presented and is of good quality. The school's focus on spelling, grammar and punctuation and the dedicated writing day have improved the quality of writing across all year groups. Pupils have many opportunities to write for different purposes and across the curriculum. As a result, pupils achieve extremely well in writing, with outcomes in 2016 being significantly above national expectations.

The learning environment is inspiring and interactive and supports the school's approach to pupil reflection. The focus on developing pupils' deeper thinking skills is demonstrated through displays that encourage pupils to answer questions about specific topics. For example, pupils stick post-it notes on thought-provoking

displays, such as the displays presenting Christianity, sharing their thoughts. This reflection enables the pupils to think deeply about spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of learning. Pupils are extremely reflective, and this is demonstrated in the way pupils respond to their learning in workbooks. Pupils are able to effectively assess their own learning, and identify what they need to do to improve further.

Teachers plan learning, making it relevant to everyday life. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on measuring, the class was set up as a post office, which involved the measuring and weighing of parcels to determine the cost of the postage. While the most able pupils were being challenged to find a best fit for the weight of their parcels, other children were using resources to support the measuring of the parcels before moving on to the costing activity. The activity involved many skills such as converting millimetres to centimetres, rounding decimal numbers, reading scales and selecting the best value. The pupils could see a purpose to what they were doing. Consequently, pupils engaged enthusiastically with the activity and were able to talk knowledgeably about their learning.

Parents are very positive about the school and say their children enjoy school. Pupils at the school are eager to talk about their reading, the books they enjoy, and the subjects they like, as well as those they find more challenging.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve teaching and learning by sharing best practice, ensuring challenge and pace in lessons, and setting high expectations. Teachers now work together to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching assessment. Teacher feedback to pupils is uniform across the school. Pupils' books show that you have established clear expectations of the standards you expect of pupils' work. The most able pupils have the chance to start on the tasks sooner to maximise learning time. This has had a positive impact on the pace at which pupils learn. Teachers continually assess learning during the lessons, and respond immediately to pupils' work. This means that teachers can identify the next steps for pupils quickly so that pupils can move on to the next level of work.

Another area for development was to plan tasks that are always challenging and closely match pupils' different abilities. You have developed robust systems for tracking and assessing the progress pupils make. These systems enable leaders to identify pupils who are not on track to make expected progress from their starting points. Teachers use this information effectively to provide challenge to the most able, and support for pupils who are in danger of falling behind. The school's current pupil progress information shows that pupils make good, and better, progress from their starting points in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The school business manager is meticulous in her recording of checks on employees. The leadership team ensures that all safer recruitment arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Employee files are exemplary. All files

contain relevant information and are filed appropriately so that those overseeing safeguarding can see that the necessary checks have been made.

Sharing the school building with an adjoining school means that the two schools work closely together. Both schools join to have regular joint premises meetings. This ensures that the school site, and other safeguarding checks, are shared and consistent.

Systems and processes for safeguarding vulnerable pupils are effective. Staff know the pupils well and there is a clear process for all staff to communicate concerns. Pupils' files are kept safe and are ordered showing a chronology for every case. As a result, pupils are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry looked at how pupils are being supported to make expected and better progress in their learning in mathematics. In 2016, in the end of key stage tests, some pupils didn't make the progress they should from their different starting points. You identified that there needed to be a far stronger emphasis on mathematical learning to match the emphasis on reading, writing and spelling. Since the beginning of the school year, you have successfully raised the profile of mathematics across the school community.
- You have encouraged parental input through weekly 'family learning' sessions, 'magical maths' after-school club, and the popular times tables and problem-solving challenges. This has helped parents have a better understanding of how to support their children at home.
- Pupils are challenged in activities through levelled questions and problem-solving tasks. Pupils' work shows that they challenge themselves to meet their targets and achieve their next steps. Pupils are now making good or better progress across key stage 1 and 2. The whole school emphasis on mathematics has meant that children in the early years are making stronger progress in numbers also. You recognise that teaching can do even more to develop pupils' deeper thinking skills and application of mathematical skills.
- Additionally, in 2016, some pupils, particularly girls, did not achieve the expected or the higher level of attainment in reading and writing at the end of Year 2. This formed my second line of enquiry. Pupil progress meetings are rigorous and focus on pupils who are not on track to make good progress. Teachers and leaders, including governors, closely monitor these pupils. Gaps in pupils' learning are identified, and teachers plan teaching and learning to meet individual needs. Pupils who previously underachieved are now making good progress in reading and writing. Support is in place to ensure that pupils do not fall behind. All groups of pupils in key stage 1 are making good or better progress from their different starting points.
- Finally, I was concerned that although attendance at Trinity St Mary's Primary School is above the national average, in 2016, persistent absenteeism for one group of pupils exceeded national figures. The school's processes for monitoring the attendance of pupils are thorough, and governors regularly check the

attendance of groups of pupils. Current attendance information shows that attendance rates for all groups of pupils are in line with national averages.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve and embed pupils' deeper thinking skills in the teaching of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other leaders and governors. I visited all the classrooms as part of my tour of the school, accompanied by you. Examples of children's work from this year were looked at. I observed children's behaviour during activities and as they moved around the school. A number of documents were reviewed, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, pupil assessment and progress information and the school improvement plan. I also took account of the 43 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaires completed by parents, and nine text messages from parents. The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.