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Mandy Reddick
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Dear Mrs Reddick

Short inspection of Edward Peake Church of England Voluntary Controlled Middle School

Following my visit to the school on 5 October 2016 with Diana Osagie, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Parents, teachers and pupils are very positive about the school and your leadership. Staff who have been in post since the previous inspection pointed to improvements in the approach to checking on how well teachers were doing their job. This has led to consistently good teaching. They are passionate about your effective leadership and are grateful for the 'excellent professional development' opportunities provided by the school and the local school partnerships. Newer staff described the induction process as 'phenomenal'. It is clear that you are equally positive about your staff.

Your school offers a wide range of opportunities for learning outside the normal school day. Clubs range from musical and sporting activities to a gardening club, poetry club, puzzle club and chess club. The school has purchased a set of steel pans and the pupils who are learning to play these as part of a team will eventually link with a school in Luton to play together and share cultural experiences.

The curriculum is exciting and engaging. Pupils' personal, social, health and economic education is good. Pupils are introduced to thinking about future careers from Year 7 and this helps to raise their aspirations. Focus weeks are a useful innovation in the school year. For example, 'Money Week', Anti-Bullying Week, 'Energetic Edward Peake Week' and 'Fairtrade Fortnight' are whole-school focuses.

As a Church of England School, you and other leaders are committed to Christian values permeating all aspects of activity. In September 2013, you formalised this commitment to being a 'Values Driven School' and in May 2015 the school was awarded the Values Quality Mark. Fundamental British values are taught to pupils explicitly.

You have identified and responded to weaknesses reflected through national tests and internal monitoring information. For example, leaders spotted that their scheme for French was not delivering the results expected and changed the approach mid-year. You admit that in responding to underperformance in some aspects of the national tests in previous years, leaders took their eye off the ball for some other aspects. For example, in response to disappointing results in writing in 2015, your actions ensured better results in writing in 2016, but gave insufficient attention to pupils' reading. Governors were able to assure me that improved monitoring will ensure that the school's response to the weakness in reading will not be at the expense of maintaining the improvements in writing, or performance in other subjects.

Leaders have put in place a scheme to accelerate the progress of pupils who find reading difficult. Inspectors listened to confident readers and pupils who found reading difficult read from their books and unfamiliar texts. They were all able to work out words by breaking them down and then recognising the sounds that letters make. However, inspectors were concerned that pupils were kept on 'catch-up' reading schemes for too long and may not be making enough progress quickly enough. Leaders have so far been too slow to evaluate the scheme's impact and as a result, while progress is made, inspectors judged that it could be even more rapid.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have become more adept at using information about pupil performance to intervene and promote better progress. Understanding of information on pupils by all staff is a work in progress. A major improvement since the previous inspection is that very effective marking really helps pupils improve their work and understanding across a wide range of subjects. It is particularly impressive in humanities. Leaders check teachers' marking through regular monitoring of the work in pupils' books.

Safeguarding is effective.

Procedures for keeping pupils safe are secure. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding procedures are robust and fit for purpose. Pupils have a safe environment in which to learn. The safeguarding officer is robust in her approach and diligent in keeping records and following procedures to ensure that the safety of pupils is maintained. Staff use the referral system well to notify concerns. Pupils told inspectors about how the school teaches them to be safe, for example, when using computers. They feel very well looked after by teachers. Pupils value 'The Peake' where teachers stay and pupils can visit and talk to them about concerns. They also know the safeguarding officer is someone they can talk to honestly. Teachers are aware of vulnerable pupils and keep a special watch on their welfare. There is good communication with local first and upper schools to ensure that information is passed on regarding vulnerable pupils. Pupils, staff and parents report very little bullying in

any form and were confident that any bullying would be dealt with effectively by teachers and the pupil 'buddies'.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Since the previous inspection, effective action has been taken by senior leaders to improve the school.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school remains impeccable, as reported at the previous inspection. Pupils are polite and welcoming.
- There is clear evidence that the longer pupils are in the school, the more progress they make. The school's and the local authority's progress information show pupils arriving in Year 5 with attainment that is below expectations. They start to make good progress in key stage 2, due to the now strong and effective teaching in Years 5 and 6 but, by the time of the Year 6 national tests, attainment remains a little below average. Progress in 2016 from key stage 1 to 2 in English and mathematics was broadly average. Across a wide range of subjects other than English and mathematics, progress in Year 5, and especially in Year 6, is much better than normally found, due to effective specialist teaching across the curriculum. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 8, effective teaching has ensured that pupils have made strong progress and are attaining at least as well as other pupils nationally. Progress is especially strong in mathematics.
- Assessment, including marking, is usually a particular strength of the teaching. Pupils respond enthusiastically to teachers' helpful feedback. Pupils enjoy the different types of checking, including marking one another's work and the opportunities to respond to teachers' comments. Pupils told inspectors that one of the best aspects of the school was that all the teachers in the school were always available to help them.
- Teachers are very clear in their explanations. Leaders have worked effectively to ensure that teaching is consistently good. This has improved since the previous inspection when there was some variability between age groups.
- Inspectors saw imaginative teaching and some good use of subject specialist vocabulary by teachers and pupils, for example in an art lesson on Van Gogh.
- Pupils are effusive about teachers who 'want us to do well', 'care for us' and 'challenge us'.
- Pupils talked a lot about 'challenge', and challenge for all ability groups was seen in the majority of lessons. For example, in a Year 5 humanities lesson, pupils were engaging with very challenging subject matter on the twentieth century politics of the Soviet Union. Books across subjects showed the most able pupils making expected and, in some cases, rapid progress. Inspectors were concerned that, by the time of the Year 6 national tests, pupils were not attaining high standards. Information on the school's baseline assessments on entry, and monitoring records of year-by-year progress and attainment, showed that overall progress during the four years in the school remains good.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they monitor the impact of the school's interventions more robustly to check more effectively how well they are improving pupils' progress
- deepen their own and teachers' understanding of information about pupils' progress and use it to identify and then tackle any gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection was carried out on one day involving one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector. They scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection. They held meetings with school leaders, representatives of the governing body, middle leaders, staff and groups of pupils from Years 6 and 8. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally around the school and observed them in classes and around the school at lesson-change time and in breaks. Inspectors considered the 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), 26 responses to the pupil questionnaire and eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspectors, in agreement with school leaders, also focused on specific aspects of the school's work. These related to any differences between pupils' progress in each key stage, how effectively the school teaches pupils to read and the level of challenge for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. They also focused on how well leaders ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently strong across all year groups.