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Mrs Geraldine Gallagher
Headteacher
St Michael's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Highgate
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Dear Mrs Gallagher

Short inspection of St Michael's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

St Michael's is a school with a strong Christian ethos, where the values of endurance, forgiveness, creation, koinonia and friendship are reflected in every aspect of its work. Staff and pupils work together exceptionally well and their relationship is a model of harmony.

You and your leaders have the highest expectations that pupils will learn well, and you value their development as happy individuals. Senior and middle leaders work well together. They have a very good understanding of the needs of all pupils. This has led to improved progress and improvements in all areas identified in the previous inspection. Pupils value their teachers and support staff highly. They take pride in their work and are enthusiastic learners. Pupils' respect for each other and adults is demonstrated in all of their activities. Pupils work well together and enjoy learning from each other.

Most parents and carers are keen to support the school; however, some were not supportive of recent changes to site security. Overall, parents value the school community. Governors provide strong leadership and are involved in the longer-

term strategic planning of the school. They commit time to the school with their regular monitoring visits and have a good understanding of how the school can sustain its improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders and the governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively. They have worked closely with the local authority and the diocese to improve the security of the school site. Leaders are committed to continuously reviewing and improving policy and practice to keep children safe.

Leaders ensure that the school's recruitment procedures are robust and include systematic checks on prospective and current staff. The school has a comprehensive safeguarding policy, which is implemented effectively. You work well with external agencies to support those pupils who need individual help.

Pupils feel safe in school. They say that teachers and other adults look after them well. A typical view from parents is that they trust the school and that children are kept very safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed our key lines of enquiry. The first of these focused on writing at key stage 2. This is because, over the past three years, pupils' progress in writing has improved. However, in 2018, boys did not do as well as girls in writing at greater depth.
- The standard of writing at key stage 2 has improved over time and is now a strength of the school. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, work enthusiastically and collaboratively to formulate their ideas in preparation for writing. For example, teachers encourage pupils to debate and express their arguments clearly. This impacts positively on the structure of pupils' writing.
- Teachers carefully plan pupils' writing as part of a well-sequenced series of lessons. Pupils' writing in their books shows that teachers skilfully interweave grammar with descriptive and creative writing. As a result, pupils write using grammatical and structural features accurately, for example sentence structure and paragraphing.
- Our second line of enquiry focused on how well teachers ensure that all pupils, particularly girls, are challenged in key stage 1 to achieve greater depth in mathematics. While there have been improvements in pupils' progress in mathematics over the last two years, there was a difference in 2018 between girls' and boys' attainment in mathematics at greater depth.
- Leaders have enhanced the curriculum with a new scheme of learning which challenges pupils to achieve a greater depth in their mathematics. As a result, increased numbers of pupils are achieving greater depth.
- Teachers encourage pupils to articulate their thinking and learning well in mathematics. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. Pupils work

well together, including on problem-solving activities. The most able pupils relish the levels of challenge teachers give them. In early years, teachers prepare children well for their next stages of learning, for example with activities involving symmetry and time.

- Teachers and higher-level teaching assistants work together effectively to ensure that pupils are supported to make progress in mathematics. This has a positive impact, particularly on girls' learning in mathematics. Leaders monitor mathematics teaching carefully to ensure that this strategy and the new mathematics scheme are continually reviewed.
- Our final line of enquiry focused on pupils' attendance. Attendance has improved for all groups of pupils over recent years and it is now in line with the national average.
- Leaders have implemented effective strategies to promote pupils' enjoyment of school and to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent, particularly girls. As a school, you track pupils' attendance individually and work closely with their families where there is a concern. As a result, pupils enjoy being at St Michael's. They value the range of extra-curricular activities at the school and regularly attend these. Pupils enjoy being with friends and appreciate that teachers encourage them to do their best.
- Pupils value their teachers, typically saying they are 'always kind and make things fair and learning fun'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems established for monitoring teaching, learning and well-being across the school continue to ensure that pupils achieve their best while enjoying life in school and beyond.

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

Yours sincerely

Janice Howkins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your two assistant headteachers, three middle leaders, two teachers, and the chair, the vice-chair and the link governor for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. I made joint visits to lessons with you. I held discussions with groups of pupils, as well as talking to parents in the playground. I took account of the 43 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire,

Parent View. A range of the school's documentation was considered, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation. I reviewed safeguarding checks, policies and procedures, and information about attendance and exclusions.