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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Tina Murphy
Headteacher
Holy Trinity Church of England Academy (South Shields)
Brockley Avenue
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE34 0TS

Dear Mrs Murphy

Short inspection of Holy Trinity Church of England Academy (South Shields)

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the school converted to become an academy. Working alongside a hard-working and supportive governing body, your skilful leadership has brought about improvements to teaching and learning. There is a tangible drive and sense of urgency to provide high-quality opportunities which allow pupils to thrive, an ambition shared by all staff. You have identified and evaluated the school's strengths and current priorities and detail further actions to address these priorities in the comprehensive school improvement plan.

Improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are quickly accelerating the rates of progress of current pupils across the school. You, governors and other school leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching, undertaking monitoring of teachers' planning for lessons and analysing work in pupils' books. You hold discussions with pupils about their learning and also spend time visiting classes to observe teaching and learning. You have recently introduced a new system to track the rates of progress pupils and groups of pupils make in their learning, and the standards they achieve. This system requires further refinement as current school analysis lacks accuracy.

Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and good relationships with adults remain key strengths of your inclusive school. Pupils develop good citizenship skills, being keen to take on responsibilities through roles such as 'class monitor' for various tasks,

being a member of the school council and seeking to set up their own health and safety committee. They take great pride in the well-ordered and extremely tidy school environment both inside and outside, benefiting from quality displays in classes and shared areas. Pupils' behaviour in class and around school remains exemplary. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent, and most are very eager to work hard.

At the inspection of the predecessor school, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching, especially in writing, so that it was of a consistently high standard across school. This has been tackled with resolve. Pupils speak clearly about the opportunities they have to respond to teachers' feedback, completing further challenges to consolidate their learning. Teachers' expectations of pupils are very high. There are many opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work, completing activities linked to their topic or the class novel. Pupils in Year 5 wrote at length to describe the reproductive system of a flower and, on another occasion, the life cycle of an amphibian. Pupils' progress and achievement in writing now match those in other subjects in statutory assessments.

You have worked hard to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of your pupils, and fires their interest through visits to important sites across the region, such as local art galleries and a Roman fort. You acknowledge the need to review and improve the school's curriculum to ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop age-appropriate, subject-specific skills and to consolidate their basic skills in reading and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as designated safeguarding leader, you ensure that policies, procedures and records are of high quality and up to date. Effective use is made by all staff of child concern forms, which provide you with detailed information on any potential issue relating to children's welfare. Your determination to leave no stone unturned in your duty to keep pupils safe is exemplified by your desire to further improve systems by introducing online systems for reporting concerns.

All staff are appropriately trained and have access to well-written policies and guidance. As a result, they have a secure understanding of their individual responsibilities for safeguarding. Pupils are very knowledgeable about bullying and e-safety. They understand how to avoid situations that may prove dangerous when not at school.

Inspection findings

- The long-established culture of keeping pupils safe and putting them at the heart of this friendly and inclusive church school community remains very evident. The personal development and welfare of all pupils are an important focus for the school, supported well by the child well-being officer. Pupils' behaviour around school and in lessons is of a very high standard.

- There are very few recorded incidents of poor behaviour and none of alleged bullying. The pupils with whom I spoke categorically stated that no bullying happens at Holy Trinity Church of England Academy, even if there are very occasional fallings-out between pupils. Pupils trust all adults in school implicitly to keep them safe and sort out any problems.
- Pupils are making consistently strong progress in most year groups in school. Work seen in books and in lessons clearly demonstrates this strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Children are getting off to a fast start in reading because adults are skilled in delivering phonics teaching that is pitched well according to pupils' abilities. Small gaps in the levels of achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates remain across school, but these gaps are diminishing quickly.
- Teachers have high expectations for all pupils to make substantial progress in their learning and expect that those who have fallen behind will catch up quickly. Work is set which is appropriately challenging for all groups of pupils, including the most able pupils. This allows all pupils to make strong progress in their learning. The school's system for tracking the progress of pupils shows that a much larger proportion of pupils in most year groups are on track to reach the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The tracking system itself requires further refinement to ensure its accuracy and to allow further analysis of pupils' performance information.
- Teachers use exciting and engaging resources to capture children's interest and engagement in the early years. Children enjoyed investigating the bodies of real fish as part of their topic 'Under the Sea', and excitedly made mud pies with 'tasty grass sprinkles'. Opportunities to develop skills in reading, writing and number are prevalent. A Nursery child explained to the inspector that she could write her name neatly and correctly because she kept practising, while some children in Reception completed single-digit additions with money as part of a shopping list.
- Work is well matched to pupils' abilities, and pupils' written work is usually extremely well presented with neat and legible handwriting. Pupils in Year 2 used their knowledge of inverse operations to find missing numbers, most-able pupils extending this task by using an algebraic approach.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a shared drive to eradicate any underperformance and improve outcomes for pupils. The school is supported well by the local authority in driving forward school improvement and in making astute decisions regarding recruitment. Governors receive high-quality information, have links to different subjects and key aspects of the school, and are involved alongside leaders in monitoring activities. They are proud of the school's achievements, recognise the challenges it faces, but appear to lack detailed knowledge of academic progress and achievement and specific improvement actions to address this.
- The school's curriculum ensures that pupils have access to the local history and heritage of the area, and have opportunities to visit areas of special interest, often for the first time. Good use is made of visiting specialists to enhance pupils' skills and understanding in physical education and modern foreign languages.

There are many opportunities for pupils to use the topics they are studying as a basis for extended pieces of writing. Pupils report a range of different subjects as being their favourite, including history, art, geography and science.

- Current curriculum plans are under review, with the aim of amending and improving the curriculum still further. Leaders have identified that subject-specific skills are not sufficiently well planned to be progressively age-appropriate as pupils move through school. Despite the opportunities for pupils to use their topic work to write at length, opportunities to use other basic skills in reading and mathematics are more sporadic.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the planned changes to the curriculum ensure that pupils have the opportunity to acquire age-appropriate skills in different subjects, and to practise and extend their skills in reading and mathematics
- further refinements to the school's data tracking systems allow an accurate analysis of pupils' and groups of pupils' progress and achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Scott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the early years leader and the school business manager. You and I visited lessons in each key stage. I met with the chair of governors, other members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school. I listened to some pupils read and looked in workbooks when in lessons. A range of documents were considered, relating to safeguarding, performance management, governors' meetings and external evaluations of the school. I examined the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and tracking of current pupils' progress. I also scrutinised pupils' recent achievement in statutory assessments and the school's website.