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Mr Miles Chester
Headteacher
Thomas's Academy
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Dear Mr Chester

Short inspection of Thomas's Academy

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2018, 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In August 2015, the school entered into a partnership with Thomas's London Day Schools and is the sole school in the Thomas's Academy Trust. The school receives significant support and specialist advice from its partner schools, which have helped to move the school forward in many aspects. You provide strong and motivating leadership, and staff share your ambitious vision for the school. Careful restructuring of the governing body has led to governors being very clear about their responsibilities. They use their experience and expertise to support the school well. Leaders at all levels are fully aware of what the school still needs to do to secure outstanding provision.

You and your staff have established a positive culture in the school. This is underpinned by the four cornerstones of the school: 'Be kind, learn to learn, think globally and create beauty.' Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and pupils are polite and well behaved. By the end of Year 6, pupils of all abilities, including disadvantaged pupils, make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, the school was in the top 2% nationally for key stage 2 progress. You and your team are justifiably proud of this success. Pupils' achievement at this stage is also very high and pupils are well prepared for secondary school.

You have addressed many of the areas for development identified at the previous inspection, such as improved attendance and the effective support provided by additional staff. Pupils have more opportunities for extended writing across the

curriculum, and the quality of their writing has improved as a result. However, key stage 1 attainment continues to be a focus for the leadership team. Outcomes at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been variable in the last two years.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors are diligent in all matters relating to safeguarding and take their responsibilities very seriously. They make sure that all pre-recruitments checks are carried out on the suitability of staff and keep up to date with safeguarding regulations. All staff have received training, for example on the 'Prevent' duty, so that they know how to recognise and report causes for concern. Records show that leaders take prompt and effective action to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

Leaders are aware of local risks and teach pupils about staying safe in and out of school. Online safety has a high profile around the school, and pupils know to 'flag it and block it' if they come across any unsafe websites. Pupils reported that they feel safe and well cared for at school. Parents and carers unanimously agree.

Inspection findings

- We first agreed to focus on pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. This was to see whether pupils are making consistently strong progress across the curriculum at the end of key stage 2.
- The school has developed a rich and balanced curriculum, which incorporates the International Primary Curriculum. Pupils benefit from having specialist teachers from Thomas's London Day Schools who enhance the range of subjects on offer, including music, art, drama and physical education. Subjects such as history, geography, science and religious education are taught through termly topics, allowing pupils to study a particular theme from different perspectives. Work in English is often linked to other subjects, allowing pupils to use and improve their writing skills. The new mathematics programme has been successfully established. Extra-curricular trips, such as visits to London museums, link to pupils' work in class, offering pupils exciting opportunities to extend their learning.
- From scrutinies of pupils' work book, it is evident that pupils make strong progress in a range of subjects. Leaders ensure that skills and knowledge in specific subjects are developed effectively through the well-planned curriculum.
- We next looked at pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 1. In 2017, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standard and at greater depth was below average, and in the lowest 10% nationally. In 2016, attainment was in line with the average in reading and writing at the expected standard, but below in mathematics.
- Leaders have identified this as a priority and have analysed the 2017 outcomes. This has led them to design an action plan specific to the current Year 3 cohort,

targeting pupils' individual needs. Staff know their pupils well, not just at key stage 1, and track their progress and attainment carefully to identify where additional support is needed. Leaders are able to identify accurately where pupils make strong progress, particularly in writing.

- Current performance information and pupils' work in books indicate that the outcomes at key stage 1 are rising. However, improved outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening test have not led to improvements in key stage 1 reading, particularly at greater depth. Pupils can use their phonics skills to decode words, but they do not always understand what they mean. This is an area you have identified for further improvement.
- Finally, we agreed to consider the effectiveness of the early years provision in helping children to achieve their early learning goals. For the last three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been below average.
- The Nursery and Reception areas are bright and welcoming. Children clearly enjoy the wide range of activities on offer, particularly in the well-resourced outdoor environment. School leaders have collectively taken on leadership of the early years to support the team during maternity absence. Staff have focused on developing children's communication and language, as baseline assessments show that pupils' development in this area is particularly low. The provision is language rich as a result, and staff take every opportunity to talk with pupils regularly. Parental contact has improved, and parents are kept fully informed of their children's development through regular progress meetings.
- Staff assess pupils when they join the early years provision, and this information shows that pupils' starting points are very low. Most children make good progress by the end of the Reception Year, but writing skills are not as well developed as other areas of learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve pupils' understanding at key stage 1 of what they read so that more pupils achieve greater depth
- staff develop children's literacy skills in early years so that a greater proportion of pupils are well prepared for Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Jude Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other school leaders. I met with five governors and had a discussion with you and the school's safeguarding team. I visited all classes, accompanied by you, and spoke to pupils about their learning. I also talked to groups of pupils informally at lunchtime. I undertook a book scrutiny with school leaders and looked at a sample of books chosen by school leaders from a range of subjects and classes. I evaluated documentation provided by the school, including the self-evaluation, action plans, current assessment information, the school's analysis of historic outcomes, and safeguarding procedures. I reviewed the 51 responses to Parent View, the 20 staff questionnaires and 10 pupil responses to the online survey.