

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 June 2016

Mrs Hazel Johnson
Headteacher
Polebrook Church of England Primary School
Main Street
Polebrook
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
PE8 5LN

Dear Mrs Johnson

Short inspection of Polebrook Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 2016, 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 October 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have developed a broad and balanced curriculum which enthuses the pupils to learn. Pupils achieve particularly well in the arts, music and sport. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points through school. Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 have been significantly above the national average for all subjects in most years, since the previous inspection.

The pupils are very considerate towards each other. Their behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good. The older pupils take good care of the younger pupils. Pupils enjoy the opportunities that the curriculum provides. Trips to the theatre to watch 'Mary Poppins' and 'The Lion King' have enthused the pupils' interest for the performing arts. Recently, all the key stage 2 pupils enjoyed writing a play called 'A Matter of Sugar and Spies' and performed it in front of their parents.

At the previous inspection, the inspector praised the school for the strong partnerships with parents and support agencies, the pupils' good behaviour and the well-organised curriculum. These strengths have been maintained. The inspector also identified, however, that pupils' mental calculation skills to solve mathematical problems still required improvement. In addition, the inspector asked the school to develop the skills and expertise of the middle leaders. Finally, the inspector asked you to improve the tracking of pupils' progress to determine if further intervention was needed to accelerate the progress of pupils.

You and your team have taken effective action to address most of these areas. Scrutiny of pupils' mathematics books shows that pupils are effectively solving problems and using their mental calculation skills to help solve some of these problems. As a result, pupils have attained highly in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 compared to other schools nationally, and your current tracking information shows most pupils are continuing to make good progress.

Your tracking of pupils' progress is detailed and you know how well groups of pupils are achieving throughout the school. Consequently, you identify those pupils who need further intervention to boost their progress and put the support in place. As a result, most pupils are making good progress, including those pupils who have special educational needs or disability.

Middle leaders have developed their subject expertise since the previous inspection and regularly lead staff meetings. The mathematics leader also delivers training to the local cluster of schools. However, middle leaders have not monitored the impact of their training across the whole school well enough to check that all groups of pupils are making good progress. As a result, not enough of the most able pupils are achieving above age-related expectations in key stage 2. I have asked you to further develop the role of the middle leaders so they check the progress of all groups of learners across the school to ensure all pupils are making good progress.

Pupils write in different genres and across a range of subjects. However, pupils misspell words that they should know and do not consistently join their handwriting. I have asked you to further develop pupils' writing composition by giving them more opportunities to write at length. I have also asked you to improve the pupils' spelling ability and pupils' presentation of work in their books.

Safeguarding is effective.

You are the designated lead for safeguarding and deliver training for all staff on an annual basis to ensure staff are kept up to date with the latest safeguarding requirements. Safeguarding training is also in place for new staff as part of their induction process. The school is proactive and works with a variety of agencies, including the local authority's multi-agency team, to meet the needs of children and their families. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are securely stored.

School records show that incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of road safety and of how to keep themselves safe on the internet. Pupils know not to give out their personal details online. In the last academic year, pupils' attendance was higher than the national average. Pupils' attendance in the current academic year has fallen to just below the national average. The school is working with a small minority of pupils' families to help improve attendance and, as a result, the attendance for most of these pupils is rising.

Inspection findings

- You and your team have worked successfully and creatively to deliver a rich curriculum which enables pupils to learn and achieve well across a wide range of curriculum areas. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic and appreciate the opportunities that the curriculum provides. Pupils told me how much they enjoyed the recent Egyptian day, writing in hieroglyphics and playing musical instruments. Pupils also told me how they enjoy going into the forest and making bird feeders. In recognition of the school's care for the environment, the school has gained the Green Flag award.
- Music is a real strength of the school. Most key stage 2 pupils participated in an orchestra alongside pupils from other schools. Last year, the school won first prize for creative music at the Oundle Festival of Music and Drama. In recognition of the school's high standard of musical achievement, the school also had its creative music videoed and played at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms Ten Pieces project.
- You and your team are committed to ensuring pupils make good progress. As a result, standards at the end of key stage 1 have been rising steadily since the previous inspection, to be significantly above other outcomes nationally. There were too few pupils at the end of key stage 1 in 2015 to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying them. Close scrutiny of pupils' current work in key stage 1 shows that most pupils are making good progress in mathematics and writing. Last year, outcomes for the Year 1 phonics check were high compared to the national average and current school information shows that outcomes will continue to be high this year.
- The school works well with a range of agencies to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability. You closely identify the extra support that pupils need and track the progress of pupils towards meeting specific targets. As a result, pupils' progress is good.
- You ensure those pupils who are entitled to pupil premium funding receive the support they need to achieve across the curriculum area. There are too few disadvantaged pupils to comment about their attainment without risk of identification.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to plan and carry out investigations to develop their scientific skills. In key stage 1, pupils have investigated which materials make a good umbrella and which ball bounces the highest. Pupils have recorded their results accurately and, as a result, have made good progress in science.
- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their mathematical skills to solve problems. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils had to calculate the perimeter of irregular shapes using decimals and then rounding the answer. In Years 3 and 4, pupils were calculating two-step problems involving fractions. Pupils

enjoyed both challenges and were eager to complete the calculations. However, close scrutiny of pupils' work shows pupils have not been given enough opportunities to reason about number. As a result, not enough of the most able pupils in key stage 2 are achieving highly for their ages.

- Pupils are given a range of opportunities to write across the curriculum, using a range of genres. After the theatre visit to see 'Mary Poppins', one child from the early years wrote, 'I liked Jane and Michael flying up the chimney.' Pupils have a good vocabulary and use this well in their writing. However, pupils are not developing their writing as well as they should because they have insufficient opportunities to write at length, particularly the most able. Not all pupils are spelling words that they should know correctly. In addition, although pupils are taught to join their handwriting, pupils do not consistently join their letters and pupils' presentation of work in their books is not as good as it should be.
- Middle leaders demonstrate good subject knowledge and are committed to improving pupils' progress. They regularly carry out effective moderation of pupils' work in school and with other local schools in the cluster to check that the teachers' assessments are accurate. Middle leaders also lead on training for their subject. However, they have not regularly checked the impact of their training on pupils' achievement across the school. As a result, they have not identified that the most able pupils have not made as much progress as they should in key stage 2.
- Children make good progress in the early years as a result of a well-planned curriculum. Outcomes have been above the national average at the end of the Reception Year. Although outcomes fell in 2015, they are expected to rise this year. During the inspection, children enjoyed reading a book in the den they had built outside and were keen to write instructions for a game they had made. The teaching assistant skilfully asked children how they were going to measure 'Polly Parrot' to develop their thinking skills as well as their number skills. There is some impressive Kandinsky artwork on display that children made while listening to music composed by Wagner. It is clear that children have the opportunity to investigate and explore. As a result, they make good progress in all areas of learning in the early years.
- You strongly promote equality of opportunity at the school. You closely monitor the participation of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in all aspects of the school's life. You ensure all pupils can benefit from the opportunities that the school provides. As a result, a large majority of pupils have been able to take a leadership role in an activity this year to develop their confidence and leadership skills. Pupils' participation in the extra-curricular clubs that the school provides is also high. Consequently, pupils enjoy school and achieve well in many curriculum areas.
- Pupils show great tolerance and respect towards people of other faiths and people who may have different lifestyles from their own. Pupils are

determined that everyone should be treated fairly. Pupils vote to elect members of the school council and understand how democracy works. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- The school promotes pupils' physical well-being through encouraging pupils to eat healthily and through supporting them to participate in a wide variety of sports. The sport crew leaders organise games at lunchtime in which all pupils can participate. Recently, pupils have won the tag rugby and mini-basketball tournaments against other local schools. Consequently, pupils are proud of their sporting achievements.
- Governors are committed to the school and monitor closely how well the school is progressing against the priorities set in the school development plan. As a result, standards have risen in key stage 1 since the previous inspection. Parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, are highly supportive of the school. One parent wrote, 'Pupils have so many opportunities apart from in the classroom to extend their learning.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further develop the role of middle leaders to check more closely the progress pupils make across the school, particularly the most able
- pupils' writing improves by giving them more opportunities to write at length, increase their ability to spell age-appropriate words and to improve their handwriting and presentation skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher, the senior teacher, the early years teacher and the newly qualified teacher. I spoke with parents and to a group of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils. I visited every classroom with you and we looked at pupils' work. I met with four members of the governing body. You and I reviewed records about keeping children safe and about pupils' behaviour and attendance. I studied the school development plan and your

self-evaluation. I looked at documents relating to performance management and your evaluations of teaching and learning. I considered the 21 responses to Parent View, the nine responses to the Ofsted free text service and the eight responses to the staff survey.