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Mr Matthew Bulpitt
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bulpitt

Short inspection of St Alfege with St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Despite recent changes in the senior leadership, the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection has been maintained. Your arrival in September 2016 as interim headteacher galvanised staff and enabled the school to gather momentum; so much so, that the governors have agreed that your post at St Alfege with St Peter's is to continue for the next two years. You continue to be the substantive headteacher of a local outstanding school and have developed a productive partnership between the two schools. From January 2017, you will take up the post of executive headteacher of both schools.

In the short time you have been at the school, you have skilfully enabled staff at all levels from both schools to work in a notably mutual and beneficial partnership. Consequently, staff are learning from each other and ensuring that pupils receive an even better quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics and reading.

You are ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher. She stepped up from the post of assistant headteacher to cover the maternity leave of the current post holder, who returns very shortly. The acting deputy headteacher has employed a rigorous approach to following up any concerns regarding those families whose children are persistently absent. Her close work with the newly appointed office manager in conjunction with the advisory attendance officer from the local authority has seen the proportion of persistent absentees fall noticeably.

Since the previous inspection, the area for improvement has been addressed successfully. Teachers are able to provide pupils with additional time to reflect on their work during lessons. This helps pupils to respond to teachers' feedback and improve their writing because they have well-structured time in lessons. Pupils spend more time reading in all stages of the school. During visits to lessons, I saw pupils demonstrating a high level of concentration and interest in their work.

I was struck by the close sense of community, warmth and friendly ethos of the school. My view was reinforced during my informal discussions with a sample of parents at the start of the day. They all expressed very high levels of satisfaction with their children's education and school life in general. They spoke of accessible staff and senior leaders. Parents are happy with the regularity of home reading and other homework. Parents also spoke of how well behaved pupils are and how well staff deal with the very few cases of bullying. The online responses to Ofsted's questionnaire Parent View underpinned what I had been told.

Pupils are also very happy with their school lives. One pupil told me, 'I love this school because you can be who you want to be.' Others told me that they were confident that adults would look after them and help them with any problems. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and this can be seen in the high levels of attendance and reducing proportions of pupils who are persistently absent.

Staff morale is very high. The group I spoke with were enthusiastic and passionate about their work. I visited lessons in the Nursery class through to Year 6. Pupils were animated by their learning and interested in their work. This spirit of happiness and engagement is clearly a feature of the school. Nonetheless, you have managed the transition of the school leadership effectively and maintained staff morale.

The assessment and test results for 2016 were a mixed picture. The proportion of children in the early years achieving good levels of development continues to improve. In key stage 1, pupils' reading, writing and mathematics results were above the national average. However, the results for disadvantaged pupils and most-able disadvantaged were below average. Pupils' standards of reading in Year 6 were below average, but standards in writing and mathematics were broadly in line with the national average. Again, the results achieved by all disadvantaged pupils were below the national average, mainly because of the slower than expected progress many of the pupils made.

Both you and the chair of the governing body expressed your disappointment in these results. The actions taken by the school have been swift and effective. All pupils, especially the most able disadvantaged, are making more rapid progress. Pupils' work and the assessment information discussed with you and middle leaders provide strong indications of this faster progress. Pupils told me that they are reading more than before and the quality of readers in the sample I heard was very reassuring.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are in place and are fit for purpose. Staff checks are in place and are appropriately monitored by senior leaders, including the chair of governors. All staff have received the required training to support their understanding and knowledge of the government's current statutory guidance.

Inspection findings

- You did not hesitate to take swift actions to accelerate the progress of those groups of pupils at risk of making less progress than their peers. Staff have been galvanised to focus on the rates of progress of all pupils even more closely. As a result, pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills have improved markedly since September. There are some good examples of most-able disadvantaged pupils working at the higher levels expected of them.
- Leaders at all levels know the pupils very well. The deputy headteacher's impressive knowledge of individual pupils is put to good effect in ensuring that each pupil is receiving the appropriate support to make as much progress as they can.
- Senior leaders, including the governing body, are well aware of what the school needs to do to improve and have ensured that the appropriate actions are in place. As a result, the quality of teaching and rates of progress for most pupils are improving rapidly.
- The middle leaders are a highly effective and knowledgeable team. They know the pupils well and have worked closely with other members of staff to improve the quality of teaching. Pupils have responded positively to the adjustments in lessons that have been made since the start of the school year.
- The governing body acted with appropriate urgency following the lack of appropriate responses to the adverts for a new headteacher. Governors worked closely with the local authority's effective guidance to ensure that the leadership of the school was secured in time for the start of this academic year.
- Governors are well led. They know the school's strengths and are very active in bringing about the changes needed to improve the school and to fulfil their ambitions for its future. Many governors are known to staff and parents. In addition to providing appropriate challenge to senior leaders, they visit the school to take part in different activities. These include listening to readers and attending different events. One of the governors leads the celebration assemblies.

- Although attendance is above average and has been for several years, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has in the past been higher than the national average. This is being addressed in a highly effective manner through the use of regular monitoring meetings between the deputy headteacher and business manager. These meetings ensure that families are contacted by the school on a regular basis and where necessary more formal strategies are employed. As a result, the small number of pupils who are regularly absent from school is falling noticeably.
- Senior and middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly. My observations in lessons noted a consistently calm, working atmosphere in all classrooms and around the school. Pupils of all ages were thoroughly absorbed in their learning and keen to tell inspectors about their work.
- In pupils' writing and mathematics, it is clear that there is a stronger emphasis on those pupils who are most-able and the most able disadvantaged. Teachers build on pupils' prior attainment and learning and provide clear direction for next steps. Nonetheless, senior leaders are anxious to embed the effective systems that assess pupils' progress as soon as possible.
- The improvements to the quality of teaching have ensured that pupils' work is of a high quality. As a result, progress since the start of the school year has been rapid. However, you agree that it is too early to see the full benefit of the changes that have been made, for example, ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils should achieve. Secure plans are in place to ensure that leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching continues.
- The quality of writing seen and standards of mathematics were in line with expectations for the ages and abilities of the pupils. There were some particularly mature and high-quality examples of writing about 'Macbeth' in Year 6.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported during lessons. Their progress is strong and levels of fluency in speaking and writing are in line those of with their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-structured work during lessons, and teaching assistants are well deployed to support them. Thus, they make progress in line with that expected of other pupils nationally.
- The early years provision is well organised and prepares children well for school. Children were seen joining in singing and writing activities with high levels of concentration.
- Those pupils who read to me were able to talk with pleasure and interest about their books. They were pleased that they have more time to read in groups, individually to adults and on their own. Pupils read with fluency and expression and explained the plots of the stories. Older pupils explained the meaning of similes and the use of powerful adverbs.
- You are clear that there is more to do in improving the quality of teaching. You are particularly keen to ensure that teachers assess pupils' work with consistent accuracy, especially at the higher levels.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all staff apply the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve when assessing pupils' work
- teachers use assessment information accurately and consistently to ensure that pupils make at least good progress in all subjects
- all staff remain focused on the progress of those pupils who are disadvantaged, particularly those who are the most able.

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

Yours sincerely

John Seal

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Following my analysis of the available pre-inspection information and discussion with you at the start of the inspection, we agreed the following key lines of enquiry for the inspection:

- Have leaders at all levels ensured that all staff have been trained to know and understand the latest statutory safeguarding guidance?
- Are leaders at all levels securing better progress for disadvantaged pupils, especially the most able?
- What strategies have leaders employed to increase the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth and higher levels?
- How effective are the school's strategies for lowering the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent?

I carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection. I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the middle leaders. I also met with a group of staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Individual pupils read to me. I spoke with many pupils during lessons and in the playground. I spoke informally with a sample of parents before school. Information provided by the school was scrutinised, including the school's safeguarding records, policies and procedures and the single central record of recruitment checks.

The school's assessment of its performance and information about pupils' progress was reviewed. I visited lessons in Nursery and Reception classes, and for key stages 1 and 2. I looked at pupils' work. I took into account 46 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.