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Mrs Simone Goddard
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Dear Mrs Goddard

Short inspection of Pulham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 the school was judged to be good in February 2013.

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 continued to provide strong and effective leadership, creating a climate where staff know that they are trusted to be creative and to innovate so that they improve their practice. You encourage them to be reflective practitioners. Consequently, teachers regularly review their own lessons, how their classrooms are organised and how resources are used by pupils in order to see how improvements could be made. All staff who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire said that you support their professional development and that they feel respected and motivated.

You, together with your staff team and governors, recognise the school's strengths but are not complacent. You seek to further improve the school, regularly reviewing the school's performance. You and your subject leaders check teaching regularly but sometimes checks do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on learning over time. Subject leaders do not always record their findings so it is sometimes difficult for you and governors to know exactly what has been identified for improvement and how it has been followed up. You identify where there is excellent practice and undertake visits to bring back ideas for the school's further improvement. The school's vision day was used as an opportunity for staff, governors, pupils and parents to think about what else they would want from the school and to reaffirm the school's core vision and values.

Pulham Primary School is a school where pupils are valued as individuals. Staff take time to get to know each pupil right from the start of school. You and your team ensure that pupils are given lots of opportunities to develop socially and emotionally. For example, during the inspection, pupils were role-playing how they would manage their feelings and behaviour in particular situations. Pupils regularly work together across age groups to take part in circle-time discussions led by the Year 6 pupils. These opportunities enable pupils to become thoughtful and caring individuals.

The previous inspection identified that more could be done to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society. You have successfully addressed this through your curriculum planning, which includes learning about different cultures, for example through geography and through your personal and social education programme, which includes visits to cities such as London and rural areas for the Year 6 residential trip to Derbyshire. As a result, pupils know about diversity and recognise that everyone should be treated with respect.

Pupils currently in the school are making good progress because teachers and leaders carefully consider the needs of each pupil and put in place support to help them achieve the best they can. Teachers and other adults carefully check the progress that pupils are making, especially in English and mathematics, asking probing questions during lessons and marking work in line with the school's policy. Teachers ensure that pupils are actively involved in lessons, maximising learning time. This was an area for improvement at the time of the last inspection which has been addressed successfully. Teachers plan work which will enthuse and engage pupils in their learning. Pupils recognise this when talking about the lessons they enjoy, such as science and art. They also spoke warmly of the support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants, saying 'they don't just help us learn, they make learning fun'.

Pupils behave well in school. Pupils said that occasional incidents at playtime are always dealt with by adults. Pupils told me that bullying is very rare because everyone generally gets along well in school. Pupils who join the school are made to feel welcome. Pupils feel that teachers care about them and take time to sort out any issues swiftly so that they do not escalate.

Governors provide a good level of support and challenge for leaders. They have confidence in leaders, recognising that the school benefits from a strong team who work well together. Nevertheless, they are confident in challenging leaders, for example about budget decisions or the provision of after-school clubs. Governors have reviewed their own skills and actively recruited governors who can bring additional skills. They meet regularly in committees and as a full governing body, and visit the school to check on aspects of the school's development plan.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. They particularly welcome the wider opportunities for learning that the school provides. Typical of the comments made were those of one parent who said, 'the school educates the whole child while encouraging academic rigour', while another praised 'the amazing learning

opportunities for the children'. Some parents said that they would welcome more after-school clubs and further information about their child's progress during the year. Every parent who responded to the online questionnaire said that they would recommend the school to another parent.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have ensured that very effective systems are established for keeping pupils safe and that safeguarding has the highest priority in school. Checks on staff are carried out thoroughly and recorded carefully. Records are detailed and of high quality. You and the safeguarding governor regularly double-check that everything is in order. Files for pupils about whom there are concerns are very well maintained. These show that adults in school know what to look for that may indicate that a child is at risk and demonstrate that you take effective action in response to concerns.

You ensure that all staff training is up to date. You provide regular safeguarding reports to the governing body so that they know that school policies and procedures are being followed. You make sure that safeguarding is a standing item on the staff and teaching assistant weekly meeting agenda, providing a forum to raise any issues or provide any updates. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online because they are taught this in lessons and through assemblies. While you have held a meeting with parents to discuss the safe use of technology, you recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that parents understand the potential risks posed to their children and how they can help to prevent these.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to look at progress in reading and writing in the Reception and key stage 1 classes as an inspection focus. This was because, in 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading and writing was lower than that found nationally. In addition, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics assessment had varied. In particular, I looked at the progress being made by boys, who tended to achieve less well, both at the end of the Reception Year and in Year 2 in 2016.
- In the Reception class, I found that children's skills in early reading and writing are developing well. Staff ensure that tasks are developed from pupils' individual needs and enthusiasms. This is having a positive impact on all pupils and especially on developing boys' literacy skills. An example of this was seen during the inspection, when a group of boys happily played with toys, role-playing a story of a fire and people being rescued. Afterwards, staff talked with the boys about their story. They encouraged them to write down some of the words relating to the story so that they could share this with the rest of the class. Their enthusiasm for the task was evident.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are developing an enthusiasm for reading because this is promoted by teachers. Teachers share stories with pupils and encourage pupils to read frequently at home. Pupils' phonics skills are developing well because

teaching is well structured and groups well organised to meet pupils' needs.

- A structured programme to develop pupils' reading and writing skills is used effectively and is also contributing to the good progress that pupils are making in their literacy skills. The impact of this is evident in pupils' writing books, where work is of a good standard.
- A second inspection trail that we agreed upon was to look at progress in Year 6, particularly in mathematics, and how well the most able pupils are being challenged. In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was similar to that found nationally. However, the proportion who achieved a high standard in mathematics was lower than the national average. In addition, the progress of pupils in reading and mathematics was below average. You and your Year 6 teacher have carefully analysed the Year 6 outcomes to see how you can ensure improvements, making mathematics a key area for improvement in your school's improvement plan.
- You identified that, in reading, some pupils were unsure of how to tackle particular comprehension questions. As a result, pupils are now given more regular opportunities to develop their comprehension skills through discussion and questioning by teachers, and by regular written practice. The school's assessment information is demonstrating that this is having a positive impact, with the majority of pupils at or above the expected standard for the end of Year 6.
- Your detailed analysis of outcomes in mathematics identified that some pupils start Year 6 without some of the skills that they should have been taught lower down the school. The mathematics leader has revised planning across the school to include these elements within the correct year group. You identified that pupils' reasoning skills were underdeveloped and have begun to address this. However, this is at an early stage and is yet to be fully developed across all classes. You also identified that pupils' mental skills in mathematics were insufficiently sharp and so regular practice opportunities are now provided in the Year 5/6 class. However, pupils in some other classes are not being encouraged to develop and use their mental skills sufficiently.
- You have introduced a mathematics computer program which pupils use in school and at home. Pupils told me that this has really increased their enthusiasm for mathematics.
- Teachers provide a range of challenges at different levels of difficulty in mathematics. This allows for the most able pupils to select challenges which extend their thinking. At the same time, it allows for others to work towards more challenging tasks as they grow in confidence.
- As a result of the changes you have made to the teaching of mathematics, pupils are making good progress in Year 6, including the most able pupils. The school's assessment information and pupils' work in books indicate that outcomes are improving significantly.
- A further area that we looked at during the inspection was the progress being made by pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The small numbers of these pupils mean that outcomes

vary from year to year. I wanted to make sure that these groups are making good progress.

- You check the progress of disadvantaged pupils very carefully, for example through pupil progress meetings and as part of your regular analysis of assessment information. You make sure that the support provided for these pupils is well matched to their individual needs. For example, you provide individual teaching time for these pupils and support those who have emotional needs through nurture groups. You have also set up an after-school homework club for pupils who lack internet access at home. This is having a positive impact. Evidence in pupils' books and the school's assessment information demonstrate that these pupils make good progress because of this well-tailored support.
- The leader for special educational needs knows all the pupils well. She attends pupil progress meetings so that any issues can be identified early. She works with staff to create a detailed picture of what each pupil can do and where they have needs. Support is well planned and reviewed regularly to ensure that this is having an impact. A good balance of support within the class and additional support and opportunities for independent working is provided for these pupils. As a result, the majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- The final area that we looked at during the inspection was how well the school's wider curriculum caters for pupils' needs and ensures that pupils make good progress. This was because the school uses an enquiry-based approach which includes a broad range of subjects. I wanted to ensure that this enables pupils to develop their skills and knowledge well over time.
- The school's enquiry approach means that pupils identify what they already know and what they want to know. This allows for the most able pupils to extend their learning by exploring concepts in more depth. Some good links are made between subjects. For example, in Year 6, pupils were learning about refugees, and their work was linked to literacy texts and to mathematics work about distances and using data. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their writing in subjects such as history and geography are not as well used in some classes as in others. Where pupils do write in other contexts, for example about a science experiment, sometimes teachers' expectations are not as high as in English. Teachers accept work with, for example, spelling errors for words that pupils are capable of spelling.
- Pupils enjoy a rich and varied curriculum. For example, good-quality artwork using different media and techniques was evident around the school. During the inspection, pupils were using tablets to photograph the school's meadow and then to create a painting by drawing on their photographs. Pupils are given opportunities to find out about the world now and in the past, for example carrying out scientific experiments to investigate scientific concepts and taking part in a local history project resulting in an Icen house being built on-site. As a result, pupils make good progress in a range of subjects.
- Leaders recognise that they have yet to establish a system for ensuring consistency in the judgements that teachers make about pupils' progress that is as rigorous in other subjects as in English and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the outcomes of checks on teaching and learning by subject leaders are systematically recorded and are better focused on how teaching is helping pupils to make progress over time
- progress in mathematics continues to improve, ensuring that teaching provides more opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their mental mathematics, problem-solving and reasoning skills
- opportunities for writing across the curriculum are well used in all classes and that teachers' expectations of pupils' writing is as high in other subjects as in English lessons
- a system is established for ensuring consistency in the judgements that teachers make about pupils' progress that is as rigorous in other subjects as in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Maria Curry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, with subject leaders and with four governors. I met with a group of pupils from Years 3, 4 and 5. I heard a sample of pupils read. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I visited all classes and evaluated pupils' work. I checked the school's website and found it to meet requirements on the publication of specified information.