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Mr Robin Bunting
Headteacher
Paulerspury Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Bunting

Short inspection of Paulerspury Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 the school was judged to be good in February 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection.

There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.

You were appointed to the school in September 2017. A new chair of governors was also appointed at the start of this academic year. You took time over the autumn term to get to know the staff, pupils, and parents and carers. You told me your concerns and demonstrated to me that you have a clear understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. Since the start of the spring term 2018, you have begun to make some changes which are reflected in the school's development plan.

The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school, and you have ensured that it is welcoming and friendly. It remains very much at the heart of the community. You value the contribution of the wider community within the school. For example, you welcome a local knitting group, whose members come into school at lunchtime to share their skills with the pupils.

The learning environment supports pupils' learning and pupils' achievements are celebrated. In classes, during my visit, we saw staff using questions effectively and encouraging pupils to think and solve problems independently. Pupils were also encouraged to support each other and share their knowledge and skills.

You have put into place clear monitoring procedures, which have informed professional development training for the staff. Teachers now make better use of assessment to plan learning that builds on pupils' knowledge and skills. However, this is better established in some classes than in others. Where it is more consistent, it is beginning to have an impact on raising standards, particularly in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You place the highest priority on safeguarding. You follow rigorous procedures for making referrals to outside agencies. Detailed records are kept where you have a concern for the safety or well-being of a pupil. All staff are fully trained in safeguarding procedures and know how to raise a concern, should one arise. They understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Governors are also trained in safeguarding. You have ensured that the all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The pupils I spoke with told me about a culture where they feel listened to and staff deal effectively with any concerns that pupils may have. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. Pupils have the confidence to support each other but they know when to ask an adult for support. Pupils were able to tell me what they need to do to keep safe when using social media. Pupils are encouraged to successfully reflect on their behaviour and understand how their behaviour might affect their peers.

Inspection findings

- The rate of persistent absence from school over the autumn term 2017 was above the national average for the previous academic year overall. You have taken some steps to improve the rates of attendance of all pupils. You have stopped authorising holidays in school time, in line with Department for Education guidance. However, school information shows that, currently, the proportion of pupils who are most frequently absent from school remains too high.
- Attainment in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 places the school in the lowest 10% of all schools. The evidence gathered during this inspection confirms there are some areas of strength. For example, pupils are taught to read well. They read with fluency and intonation. The progress that pupils make is improving where you have put in place specific additional support. However, the examination of pupils' books confirmed that progress is not rapid enough in writing and too many pupils are unlikely to meet the expected levels at the end of key stage 1. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities in mathematics to apply the skills that they have learned. Progress in both writing and mathematics is limited. The local authority is now supporting the school. They have put in place a mentor headteacher who will support you in raising standards. The local authority, like you, understand the need for all pupils to make rapid and sustained progress if they are to reach the levels they should.

- Pupils' progress in writing by the end of key stage 2 placed the school in the lowest 20% nationally for two consecutive years. In some classes, teachers do not teach grammar skills systematically, nor do they insist pupils use these skills when they write at length. This means that pupils do not embed the skills they have learned.
- Progress in mathematics this year has placed the school in the lowest 20% of schools. You are fully aware of this and you have started to implement strategies and provide additional resources to enable staff to accelerate progress for all pupils. You have provided useful support for teachers to improve their skills in the teaching of mathematics. This is beginning to pay dividends. Teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to apply the mathematical skills they have learned to problem-solving opportunities. Pupils' mathematics books show they are making progress, but this is not consistent across the school. It was seen that in some writing and mathematics books there is evidence of some progress, but it is not yet consistent or rapid enough.
- You analyse carefully the information you gain from monitoring the quality of teaching. You are making effective use of external support to enable teachers to further improve their practice.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was new to role in September 2017. She has a clear focus on the attainment and progress of the pupils. The SENCo uses assessment well to plan the next steps for the pupils and so their needs are well met.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all governors, including those who are new to the governing body, have the skills and knowledge needed to hold the headteacher and other leaders to account for the progress that pupils make
- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to practise writing in different genres, and writing for a range of different purposes, so they develop their skills to a greater depth
- a consistent and rigorous approach to the teaching of grammar skills is adopted so that pupils make rapid progress within their writing
- the teaching of mathematics better meets the needs of the pupils, including greater challenge for the most able, better support for those who find mathematical operations difficult and more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills
- they work more closely with parents whose children's absence remains a concern.

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

Yours sincerely

Geraldine Crofts
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, pupils, parents and six governors. You and I jointly observed teaching and learning in every class and looked at pupils' workbooks. During the inspection, I also went back into classes to specifically look at books.

I read school leadership documents, including the minutes of governors' meetings, pupil performance data, information on leaders' monitoring, and the school's development plan. I reviewed your safeguarding procedures and looked at the single central register.

I considered the 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the eight responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.