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Lesley Payne
Executive Headteacher
Preston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Payne

Short inspection of Preston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have ensured that all areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection report have been addressed.

The caring ethos of the school shines through in many aspects of its work. Pupils who join at times other than in the Reception Year feel welcomed and included. You place an emphasis on strong values and, consequently, pupils' spiritual and moral development is strong. Close links with the church ensure that the community is involved in the life of the school. Teachers and other adults know the pupils very well. One comment typical of parents reflected this, saying: 'The staff know the children, and the correct support and challenge is given to help them fulfil their potential.'

You and your deputy work together effectively and have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You and your team have sought additional scrutiny from external partners and the local authority, demonstrating your commitment to ensuring further and sustained improvement.

You and your staff are assisted well by governors who provide support and challenge. Governors make sure that they receive the information necessary to understand fully the performance of different groups of pupils. They conduct 'deep dives' where they focus on an aspect from your school improvement plan, and their

findings are discussed with senior leaders and the full governing body. They consult independent advisors to check that their judgements are accurate. They also take full advantage of training opportunities to ensure that they ask you and other leaders the right questions.

Teachers are particularly skilled in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and so these pupils thrive. One parent commented: 'My child has additional needs and I have found the school extremely accommodating and always keen to provide any help that she may require. I couldn't have asked for any better support from them.' Over time, these pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has mainly been strong.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A strong culture of vigilance exists in the school. Leaders make sure that they train all members of staff and regularly update them with the latest guidance. Additionally, all members of the governing body have attended safeguarding and safer-recruitment training. Some have completed safer recruitment training.

There is a very open and supportive ethos in the school. This means that not only do members of staff report their concerns in a timely way, but pupils and parents feel confident to approach school leaders to report anything untoward.

Safeguarding leaders investigate potential safeguarding and welfare issues thoroughly. They work very closely with parents and a range of external agencies to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Equally, they actively support families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Leaders make sure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in situations such as when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- Your work to sustain good outcomes across key stages 1 and 2 has been effective.
- Leaders' actions to improve pupils' rates of progress in writing have been particularly successful. Innovative new approaches ensure that pupils know what to do next to improve their learning. Pupils undertake a wide range of writing activities in every year group and across different subjects. They have many opportunities to write at length. As part of your ongoing drive to continue to improve the school, you have determined that writing skills should be further developed through more cross-curricular work. You have prepared detailed plans to achieve this.
- I wanted to ascertain whether there was evidence that the school has the capacity for sustained improvement. High standards have been maintained at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2. There are effective systems in place to check on all aspects of provision.
- Leaders are reflective and constantly challenge themselves. They address and

tackle areas they perceive to not be as effective as they should be. The high-quality professional development that leaders provide to staff has enhanced expertise across the school. Strong and effective work with other schools, including your partner school, allows staff to share ideas and check the accuracy of their assessments. All this demonstrates that you have the systems in place to support school improvement.

- While children achieve well in the seven areas of early learning, they have not performed as well in reading and writing as in other areas. Children settle quickly and enjoy early reading and writing activities. Many make strong progress in recognising the sounds that letters make. However, on occasions, pupils are not supported well enough to make the most of the activities on offer, and their reading skills do not develop as rapidly as they should. In addition, adults' assessments of what children know, understand and can do are not consistently well used. Consequently, some children do not make as much progress as they could in speaking and writing.
- The outcomes at the end of Reception in 2018 showed a fall in reading and writing attainment when compared with previous years. In addition, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check declined and was below average. You have successfully helped pupils who did not achieve the expected standard, but improving the way in which pupils learn phonics when they join the school rightly remains a priority for you.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the teaching of phonics in early years and Year 1, so that the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in Year 1 is at least in line with the national average.
- children in early years make swift and secure progress in their writing and speaking skills by ensuring that teaching meets their needs.

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

Susannah Connell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and three governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. Together with the deputy headteacher, you and I visited all

classrooms to observe teaching, learning and assessment and we looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school and heard children read. I also talked informally with pupils in lessons about their learning. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for the safe recruitment of staff. I considered a wide range of other documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its work, plans for improvement and external reports. I took account of 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 42 comments received electronically. I also spoke with parents when they were bringing their children to school.