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Mrs Julia Collins
Headteacher
St Peter's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Collins

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

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2019, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your associate headteacher provide strong leadership for the school. You both lead by example and your calm, determined approach ensures that the pupils at St Peter's get the opportunity to, as your vision statement says, 'shine'. This is a collective vision that is shared by governors, staff and pupils.

St Peter's is a caring, inclusive and respectful community and is indeed, as the pupils were keen to tell me, a 'family'. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. You have created a shared understanding that pupils' well-being is of equal importance to their academic progress. As one parent told me: 'There is a real sense of inclusion and community at the school – a friendly environment, which allows the children to thrive and be the best they can be.'

Your collaborative approach to leadership has been a key part of the developments in the school. There is a tangible team spirit among all staff. You empower and enable other leaders to bring about successful improvements in their areas of responsibility. In turn, leaders provide you with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Middle leadership is strong, and middle leaders' actions are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment.

The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils' around the school is excellent, as is their engagement in lessons. Pupils are courteous, well-mannered and friendly. They listen well and willingly follow adults' instructions. A small number of pupils

can sometimes present with challenging behaviour. However, staff respond appropriately and deal with these pupils with care and concern, so that learning continues without undue interruption. Pupils understand that some of their classmates with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) find it difficult to behave appropriately some of the time. However, they know that all pupils get help and support if they need it. The clear majority of pupils demonstrate the qualities that you call the '5 Rs' – risk-taking, resourcefulness, resilience, reflection and relationships. As a result, relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils and their peers are very positive.

Governance is strong. Governors have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have provided them with clear and comprehensive information about pupils' progress and attainment. Governors share and are committed to the school's vision and values. Ably supported by the chief executive officer and members of the trust board, governors offer an appropriate balance of challenge and support to school leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Acting as designated safeguarding leader, you ensure that the school's systems for gathering and recording safeguarding information are highly organised. As a result, staff are readily able to provide you with any pertinent information to help support vulnerable pupils. Staff are vigilant and report any concerns in an appropriate and timely manner. Leaders respond swiftly and work effectively with families and external agencies. Your record-keeping is detailed and well organised.

The open culture in the school ensures that pupils know who to go to if they have worries or concerns. Part of your vision is to 'nurture confidence'. Pupils told me that they could confidently approach any member of staff and they would help. Pupils also named a number of different members of staff who they could approach but were unanimous in their view that if there was a 'really big problem', they could approach you as headteacher and that you would help them. They understand the importance of being healthy and safe.

Pupils feel safe and say that they are well cared for by all adults in the school. They also say that they help each other to stay safe. Pupils know what bullying is and feel that it is not common at St Peter's. Indeed, when I asked the pupils about bullying, one replied: 'Bullying? Not at St Peter's!' Another quickly added: 'No, there's no bullying here, people can be hurtful, but there's no bullying.' Pupils are also aware of how to stay safe in a variety of situations, for example when working on the internet and on social media.

Inspection findings

- There was a very lively atmosphere and a hive of purposeful activity when we visited the Reception class. The children were keen to tell me that they had been learning about penguins. One child told me, 'Penguin begins with the letter p'. Another told me, 'Our tortoise is called Trevor, but that begins with t, not p'. They were keen to show me their drawings, their writing and their 'learning journey books'. Everywhere I looked, children were absorbed in learning and the classroom and outdoor area buzzed with their excitement. It is little surprise, therefore, that children make strong progress in the Reception class and they are well prepared for the demands of Year 1.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. The phonics sessions that we visited were engaging and supported the pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make. In one session, the pupils were captivated by various different items that the teacher pulled from a bag. The pupils chanted in unison, 'What's in the bag? What's in the bag? What's in the bag with the 'o' on the tag?' and then wrote down the words for each item, practising the split digraph 'o_e'. This systematic approach and engaging teaching help the pupils to master early reading skills. Consequently, the proportion of pupils achieving the phonics standard at the end of Year 1 in 2018 was above the national average.
- You have rightly placed a strong focus on strengthening the teaching of mathematics across the school. As a result of this, you have successfully secured improvement in the teaching, learning and assessment of this key subject. We visited mathematics lessons in Years 3 to 6 and saw that the clear majority of pupils were enthused and motivated. You have emphasised the importance of establishing really secure understanding at each step of learning before moving on to more complex problems. Despite being quite recent, these changes are already having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 rose above the national average. However, the most able pupils do not achieve as highly as their peers nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard has been below the national average for the past three years.
- The teaching of writing in key stage 1 has also been an area for improvement. Pupils' attainment in writing has been below the national average for the past three years. The recent introduction of a new and structured spelling scheme has been positively received by the pupils and is beginning to improve their spelling. Work in pupils' books shows better use of paragraphs, correct tenses and improved spelling. However, this is not consistent. Published data shows that in 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in writing by the end of key stage 1 was well below the national average.
- Leaders have also recently introduced a new approach to handwriting across the school. As a result, pupils' handwriting and presentation are improving rapidly.
- Leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), are resolute in their commitment to inclusion. There is a shared understanding among all staff that the progress of pupils, including those with SEND, is everyone's responsibility. Leaders ensure that information is shared with teachers

in a timely manner so that teaching can be adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, pupils with SEND are making good progress towards their individual targets.

- The vast majority of parents and carers I spoke with during the inspection and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were very positive about the school. However, several expressed concern over communication and how well the school responds to the issues they raise. They also raised concerns about the quality and frequency of the information that they receive about their children's progress. Leaders, including governors, are working to improve the way in which the school shares information with parents. Many parents were extremely positive. One parent commented: 'Our children are thriving and generally seem to be ahead of their peers who are the same age but attend different local schools. It's a very happy school in our family's experience.' Another parent captured the view of the vast majority who responded, saying: 'Overall, I am very happy with the school and the support they give our children. My children are happy and confident there, which is very important to me.'
- Pupils speak very positively about the school and enjoy taking on one or more of the numerous extra roles and responsibilities available to them. From the 'play squad', who organise play equipment, to 'worship leaders', who help and plan daily acts of worship, pupils are keen to be involved. Indeed, there was a great sense of pride and achievement from the pupils who told me that they had been elected as members of the school council.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the changes to the teaching of writing become embedded so that more pupils achieve at the expected standard and at greater depth by the end of key stage 1
- teachers provide a consistently high level of challenge in the work they set for the most able, especially in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, so that more pupils reach both the expected and higher standards by the end of key stage 2
- communication with parents improves so that they feel their concerns are listened to and they are better informed about their children's progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the York Causeway Schools Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds (Church of England), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Murray
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your associate headteacher and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with the chief executive officer of the York Causeway Schools Trust. I also met with your early years leader, your SENCo and your leaders of English and mathematics. Together, you and I visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I also looked in depth at pupils' writing and mathematics books and other work. I talked with your independent school improvement adviser. I met with a group of pupils from Years 3 to 6. I listened to eight pupils read. I also listened informally to pupils read during my visits to lessons. I took into account the six responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I also evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a sample of monitoring records about the quality of teaching. I met with you as designated safeguarding leader and reviewed documentation and records about how you keep your pupils safe.