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Mr Colin Pickard
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pickard

Short inspection of Putteridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 the 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 previous inspection.

Since your arrival in September 2016, you have created a strong team of leaders who are committed to providing the best quality of education for the pupils. Leaders share your high expectations, while being mindful and respectful of the work load that is placed on staff. Staff appreciate and value the support they receive, and the direction leaders provide to develop and improve their practice. There is a strong team ethic and morale is high. A staff member reflecting this approach said, 'I am proud to be part of a team who care so much for the children and their education.'

Putteridge is a welcoming and friendly school. During the inspection, it was clear that pupils are excited about their learning. The environment and classroom displays are testament to the rich and broad curriculum. Throughout the school, pupils in every class focus intently on their activities and are willing to discuss their learning. As one pupil told the inspector, 'Teachers think of interesting ways to make our learning fun and memorable.'

Pupils enjoy positive relationships with adults. They respond quickly to adult direction, often without any prompting. They are eager to learn and keen to do their best. They willingly contribute to class discussions and reflect thoughtfully on the views of others. Parents agree that pupils are well looked after and happy at school. One comment from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire stated: 'I would not hesitate to recommend this school. My children are well supported in all areas,

meaning they feel happy and safe and are therefore making great progress.’ Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses. Leaders check and evaluate the information they collect to ensure that they focus on the right priorities and address any issues. However, there is an overgenerous view of the impact that this work has on the overall effectiveness of the school. There is not yet enough evidence to show that pupils achieve the highest standards across the school.

At the school’s previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils’ writing by ensuring that spelling was accurate. Your leaders have reviewed the approaches to teaching spelling and have introduced a structured plan across the school. Pupils are taught spellings within the context of their writing. Teachers build pupils’ vocabulary and introduce words of increasing difficulty that pupils use through the week. Pupils use their editing skills to check their work and address any errors in their spelling. Leaders have raised expectations of pupils’ handwriting. There has been significant improvement in all classes so that pupils join their handwriting fluently. They consistently apply their literacy skills when writing across different subjects.

Your leadership team was also asked to make teaching better by sharing the best practice in the school. Leaders have accurately identified the strengths in teaching. There are planned opportunities for teachers to observe each other so that they improve their teaching. Leaders regularly visit classes to check that improvements have been made, and they provide further advice where it is required. These approaches have ensured that teaching is consistently strong across the school. However, there is more to do to ensure that all teaching is the best it can be.

Governors make a capable team and are committed to the success of the school. They have a range of expertise and skills that they use to support and challenge school leaders. Governors check that the information they receive from school leaders is accurate through their regular ‘seeing is believing’ visits to the school. However, the leaders’ school development plan does not include precise information to measure the impact of their actions. While governors understand the key priorities for improvement, they are not able to hold leaders rigorously to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Leaders make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. Staff receive regular training and updates so that they are well informed about safeguarding matters. The leader for safeguarding checks staff knowledge through weekly questions to ensure that they understand how to recognise any concerns about pupils’ safety and welfare. Leaders make use of an electronic system to store documents safely. Safeguarding records show that leaders act swiftly so that pupils receive the support they need. Your leaders ensure that pupils and parents receive the help they need through the school’s family support worker. Detailed records check the suitability of adults to work with children.

Pupils behave well, both in the classroom and outdoors. Pupils say that they feel safe because they understand how to work and play together. Pupils told the inspector that bullying rarely happens at their school. They also added that if they had a problem, then there are plenty of adults that would help us. Pupils understand how to stay safe in a range of situations, including online. All parents consider that pupils are safe at school because adults listen to their concerns and care for the children. A parent's comment on Parent View said: 'The staff are always approachable and find time for everyone. Members of the senior leadership team greet children daily, which I find a lovely caring touch that reflects the school ethos.' This was typical of other views on the online questionnaire.

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection, I looked at how leaders were improving the progress pupils made in mathematics at key stage 2. This is because in 2018, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was well below the national average in mathematics.
- Leaders have responded quickly to ensure that there are consistent approaches to the teaching of mathematics. Leaders have ensured that, across key stage 2, teachers plan effectively so that activities match pupils' age-related expectations for each year group. Together, we observed teachers making effective use of reasoning to deepen pupils' understanding of the mathematical concepts they were studying. Through skilful questioning, teachers probe pupils' understanding by asking them to explain and prove whether equations are correct. Pupils work in pairs to talk about their learning and are encouraged to use mathematical language to support the reasons for their responses. For example, pupils had to explain where quantities expressed as fractions, decimals or numbers would sit on a number line.
- Leaders provide coaching to help improve teachers' subject knowledge. Teachers plan different tasks to meet the needs of pupils. However, not all teachers systematically check that these tasks extend pupils' thinking. The challenge given for pupils is not consistent.
- During the inspection, I asked some specific questions of pupils to check their mathematical knowledge. Pupils use their recall of addition and multiplication facts well to answer correctly increasingly difficult calculations. However, pupils are not secure when asked to apply their knowledge to multi-step problems. Work in books shows that some teachers do not plan sufficient activities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to solving mathematical problems. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge that limits their progress.
- Next, I focused on how effectively leaders were developing pupils' reading skills in key stage 2. In 2018, the progress pupils made in reading at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average.
- Your leaders check that teachers deliver daily 'guided reading' sessions. Teachers plan their own questions based on high-quality texts in order to develop pupils' reading skills. Leaders have introduced 'reading passports' so that pupils read from

a range of genres to widen their reading experience. Teachers check pupils' reading to ensure that pupils are reading regularly. Pupils told me that they have lots of interesting books in the school library for them to select. Each classroom has a well-organised and attractive reading corner to encourage pupils' reading. As a result of these focused strategies, pupils are making strong progress in their reading.

- I wanted to find out if leaders were making effective use of the pupil premium funding. Leaders have carried out a thorough analysis of the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Your strategy is based on research which shows actions that have the greatest impact on removing pupils' barriers to learning. You have placed a priority on supporting pupils' social and emotional needs to improve their readiness to learn. Pastoral support is strong. Targeted interventions are supporting pupils' academic progress. The school's own information and an evaluation of their progress shows that increasing numbers of disadvantaged pupils are working at expected standards, with more now achieving higher standards.
- Finally, I explored how leaders were supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Your inclusion leader is knowledgeable and has a detailed understanding of the needs of those pupils who require additional or different support with their learning. Leaders provide specific, focused information to teachers so that they are able to adapt the learning in the classroom. Leaders check individual learning plans so that pupils with SEND make good progress towards meeting their personalised targets.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans for school improvement are precise so that leaders are held to account for the actions they take
- the strategies to improve mathematics are embedded so that pupils make stronger progress by applying their knowledge through problem-solving activities
- teachers plan activities to consistently challenge pupils to think hard about their learning in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leaders. I had separate meetings with your designated lead for safeguarding, your English leaders and your mathematics leaders. I spoke with 11 members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

I visited classes with you and your deputy headteacher, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books. I met with two groups of pupils to discuss their mathematics and their reading choices. I scrutinised several documents, including your self-evaluation, assessment information and documents relating to safeguarding.

I took account of 72 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 44 free-texts. I also took account of 39 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 21 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.