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Mrs Sarah Young
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Young

Short inspection of St Paulinus Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 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 joined the school in 2013, shortly after the previous inspection of the predecessor school. The school has gone through many changes, including converting to academy status in 2015. You say that this makes a positive difference to the school community, particularly in using additional support from the trust when required.

This is a high-achieving school in which pupils succeed and are ready for the next stage of their education. Staff morale is high and they feel well supported. Parents I spoke to were highly supportive of the school and your leadership. They told me that they valued the 'community feel' of the school and felt you were a 'forward thinking' headteacher. All parents that responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, recommended the school.

Over the last few years, pupils' progress and attainment at the end of key stage 2 have remained consistently strong in reading and mathematics. Leaders have prioritised the provision for most-able pupils, so that a greater proportion of them achieve the highest standards. You recognise that there is still more work to be done around this area.

You have focused on making changes to the school curriculum, so that pupils benefit from richer experiences in their topic lessons. This has made a positive difference to pupils' learning and enjoyment. For example, Year 3 pupils spoke with me about how much they enjoyed making Greek shields in their art lessons, linked to their history topic. Pupils are polite, welcoming and respectful. They told me that the school was a supportive and caring environment.

Governors visit the school regularly and promote the school's Christian values well. They take pupils' well-being and safety seriously and play an active part in the school community. Governors broadly understand the school's priorities but do not know about specific areas as well as they should. Senior leaders provide the governing body with lots of information, including about pupils' progress, but governors do not have an in-depth grasp of this.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that the school's safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Staff receive up-to-date training, including on aspects such as preventing extremism and female genital mutilation. They understand the school's procedures well and know what to do should they have a concern.

Records are well kept and work with external agencies is completed in a timely manner. Additional support is used well to support vulnerable pupils. For example, some pupils receive targeted help to develop their social skills and to learn to play positively in the playground. Leaders and governors work proactively to highlight the potential dangers to pupils of a busy main road.

Inspection findings

- We first agreed to look at the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve writing. We chose this because in 2015 and 2016 Year 6 pupils' progress was significantly above the national average. However, in 2017 Year 6 pupils' progress was not as strong.
- Pupils have neat and fluent writing. In key stage 1, pupils develop well-formed handwriting skills, writing with a legible style. There are consistently strong examples of pupils' extended writing in their writing books. For example, Year 5 pupils wrote detailed persuasive writing pieces about whether 'zoos are good places'.
- Pupils demonstrate strong stamina for writing. They write at length and are quick to put their ideas down to paper. Teachers encourage pupils to edit their work, which gives pupils a greater sense of ownership in improving their writing. In particular, pupils self-correct errors in punctuation and the use of conjunctions.
- Where opportunities in the wider curriculum are used skilfully, pupils use their knowledge and understanding to write interesting pieces. For example, Year 1 pupils used their topic lessons to help them write detailed descriptions linked to the Maasai.

- However, the quality of writing and handwriting in pupils' topic books is not as high as that in their writing books. Most-able pupils do not receive precise guidance on how to improve how well their writing flows to achieve the higher standards. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Next, we looked at leaders' effectiveness in developing pupils' mathematics skills. We chose this because over the past two years, Year 6 pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics has been significantly above the national average. Leaders identify mathematics as a strength across the school.
- Pupils demonstrate very strong arithmetic skills. For example, Year 5 pupils were able to multiply decimals with ease while solving a complex scaling problem. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and staff encourage pupils to collaborate and discuss their strategies. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and systematically build on pupils' understanding throughout a taught mathematics topic.
- However, the challenge for the most able pupils is variable because pupils do not consistently receive work that is matched to their needs. Some most-able pupils told me their work was too easy. Others struggled to complete very complex tasks because teachers did not provide them with effective support. As a result, these pupils' misconceptions are not cleared up in a timely manner.
- Finally, we looked at the effectiveness of leaders' actions to support most-able pupils. This was because these pupils do not make progress as strong as their peers, particularly at the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders identify the improvement to most-able pupils' learning as an area of focus. In 2017, leaders successfully improved the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher standards in reading and mathematics. The school's assessment information indicates that these pupils' progress is not as high as it could be. Leaders' actions to check the progress that the most able pupils make is not as precise as it could be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- most-able pupils make sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - leaders precisely check the progress of most-able pupils from their starting points
 - adults challenge and support most-able pupils with work matched to their abilities
- teachers' expectations of pupils' writing in their topic books are consistently high
- governors have an in-depth understanding of the school's priorities and information provided to them by senior leaders.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Amadeus Primary Academies Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Rochester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bexley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Noeman Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited classrooms and scrutinised pupils' books, accompanied by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. We reviewed the school's documentation, including the school's safeguarding and assessment information. I met with the chief executive officer from the academy trust and governors. I gathered the views of pupils in lessons and in the playground. Finally, I considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys, including 89 responses from parents and 19 responses from staff members.