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Mrs Joanne Rowley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rowley

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

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 2016 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 July 2011.

This school continues to be good.

There have been many changes since the last inspection, including your appointment as headteacher and the appointment of an entirely new leadership team and teaching staff. The current leadership team and the governing body work together successfully to maintain the good quality of education. You provide resolute and motivating leadership and delegate leadership responsibilities effectively. Staff say that you are 'open to new ideas' and you enable them to use their initiative and expertise to best effect. The school has a happy atmosphere underpinned by a nurturing environment where pupils grow in confidence and develop good attitudes to learning. Staff and governors share your high ambition for the pupils and together you have strong capacity to continue to improve the school.

You have tackled the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection successfully. Children are making more rapid progress in the early years and the proportion reaching a good level of development increased to be close to the national average in 2015. This trend of improvement is continuing because children's knowledge and skills are assessed accurately and experiences are planned extremely well to meet their learning needs. Both the indoor and outdoor areas provide exciting and challenging activities that capture children's imagination and develop their skills in all areas of learning. Attainment at Key Stage 1 has also improved steadily over four years and was above average in 2015. Pupils who are currently in Key Stage 1 are making good progress and the work of the majority is in line with or above expectations set by the National Curriculum.

In 2015 attainment at Key Stage 2 was below average, partly because this cohort was adversely affected by weaker and disrupted teaching in the past and a significant number of pupils joined the school late, with gaps in their learning. Pupils who are currently in Key Stage 2 are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and a broad range of other subjects. Learning is planned with care to stimulate pupils' interest and ensure they build on their knowledge and skills successfully. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well so they make good progress from their starting points.

You have an in-depth understanding of performance across the school based on rigorous checks on teaching and pupils' progress. Consequently, you have identified appropriate priorities for further improvement. For example, you have set ambitious targets to increase the proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress from their starting points by the time they leave Year 6. Children start school with varied experiences, and some have knowledge and skills that are below those that are typical for their age. A relatively high proportion of pupils enter school during Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Parents I spoke to were extremely positive, saying for example 'teachers are approachable, knowledgeable and work very hard'. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, are pleased with the school, saying for example that 'everyone does an excellent job'. A small minority think that leaders do not communicate with parents as well as they could.

Safeguarding is effective.

The systems to safeguard pupils are robust. The vetting procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff meet all government requirements. The most vulnerable pupils and their families receive highly effective support in school and in liaison with outside agencies. The records of incidents, support and referrals are exemplary. Attendance is checked rigorously and absence is followed up immediately. As a result, attendance has improved since the last inspection to be broadly average. All staff and governors have completed relevant safeguarding training. They have recently completed training on the government's 'Prevent' duty, providing them with an understanding of how to protect pupils from risk of exposure to extremist views.

Pupils are happy, feel safe and are well cared for. Those who spoke with me were knowledgeable about different sorts of bullying, saying they have discussed it in class and assemblies. The 'anti-bullying ambassadors' have an in-depth understanding and take their responsibilities to support other pupils and promote positive relationships seriously. They are proud of their work to introduce a 'bully bus stop' and 'friendship bench' into the playground. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View feel that their children are happy, feel safe, are well looked after and that bullying is dealt with effectively. However, a small minority feel that safety, bullying and behaviour are not managed as well as they could be. There was no evidence of bullying or unsafe behaviour seen during the inspection and the school's records were detailed and fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- There are effective procedures to manage the performance of leaders and other staff and support their professional development. Staff know what their responsibilities are and work together productively. Professional development is planned well so staff can learn from the most effective practice in and beyond school. The school draws effectively on external support and challenge from the local authority and through the local cluster of schools.
- The very thorough systems to assess and plan the next steps in pupils' learning are key factors in your success in raising pupils' achievement. In the early years, for example, teachers display each child's next steps on the 'interaction board' so adults can plan suitable activities and prompt new learning.
- Across the whole school, pupils' knowledge and skills are assessed accurately in a wide range of subjects, enabling teachers to set work with just the right amount of challenge. Teachers' marking is effective in helping pupils to improve their work. The rigorous checks on pupils' progress make sure that pupils who are falling behind in their learning are supported early on so they can catch up.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge and in-depth knowledge of the pupils they teach enable them to adapt their teaching and plan interesting and stimulating activities. For example, in the classes where there are unusually high proportions of boys, activities have been planned carefully to engage all pupils successfully.
- Teaching assistants are deployed carefully and support pupils' learning well. In Year 2 for example, the close partnership working between the teacher and teaching assistant ensures that pupils benefit from support and challenge matched to their learning needs.
- Pupils use the skills they learn in reading, writing and mathematics successfully across a range of subjects. Topic work is planned carefully to make sure pupils receive a balanced and interesting range of work that adds to their learning in subjects including science, geography, history, design and technology and information technology. You are aware that planning for progression is not developed to the same high standard in art and music as it is in other subjects.
- Staff develop positive relationships with pupils, and help them to develop personal and academic skills that prepare them well to cope with the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well. Pupils enjoy sharing their ideas and contribute enthusiastically in lessons. They develop a good understanding of different faiths and cultures and pupils from different backgrounds get on well and show respect for each other.
- British values are promoted effectively through lessons, assemblies and visits. Teachers use age-appropriate resources imaginatively to help pupils develop their understanding of values. For example, the younger children enjoyed exploring the rule of law through the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*; older pupils show a sophisticated understanding of democracy through their work on the 'Learning Council'.

- Behaviour seen in lessons during the inspection was very good; pupils were doing their best for their teachers. Pupils say that there are 'some little ups and downs' when learning is disrupted for a short period, and a small minority of parents expressed concern about disruption to learning in some classes. However, such incidents are not frequent and pupils are confident that teachers will deal with any disruptive behaviour quickly.
- Pupils take pride in their work and do their best. However, there is some discrepancy in the quality and amount of pupils' written work, especially in upper Key Stage 2, where pupils have some gaps in their learning due to previous weaker teaching. Current teaching is helping pupils to fill gaps.
- Governors have in-depth knowledge of the school because they visit classes regularly, look at pupils' work, talk to pupils and staff and understand performance data. They provide good challenge and support to leaders.

Next steps for the school

- Continue the drive to increase the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress, so that by the end of Year 6 it matches or exceeds the national average.
- Develop curriculum planning and assessment in art and music to the same high standard as that seen in other subjects.
- Ensure pupils' presentation of written work and productivity is of the same high standard in every class.
- Improve communication with parents so they are more aware of the positive aspects of the school's work and feel well informed.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Manchester, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Salford City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, senior leaders and eight members of the Governing Body, including the Chair, and the school's adviser. I visited all classrooms to observe learning and look at pupils' work. I spoke with pupils during lessons, and in two meetings. I looked at your assessment information, self-evaluation, action planning and safeguarding procedures. I spoke with several parents at the start of the day and took account of 12 'freetext' comments and 21 responses to 'Parent View', the online questionnaire for parents. I also took account of staff and pupils' questionnaires you had conducted previously in school as you were not able to access the online questionnaires during the inspection.