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Miss Louise Cerqua
Headteacher
St Paul's Walden Primary School
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Dear Miss Cerqua

Short inspection of St Paul's Walden Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 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 January 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You have established a clear sense of purpose among the staff, pupils, parents and governors. As a result, St Paul's Walden Primary School is a purposeful and harmonious place for all pupils to learn and flourish. This is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive views of parents. The leadership team, under your clear direction, has maintained and improved on the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. All pupils make good progress as a consequence.

You have established a very positive climate for learning throughout the school. Pupils are keen learners. They love coming to school and attendance is above average as a result. They talk enthusiastically about the exciting range of learning experiences that teachers plan for them. Vibrant examples of pupils' work around the school contribute to the high-quality learning environment. Whole-school visits to places of worship, such as a Sikh gurdwara, provide pupils with a close insight into the culture and beliefs of others. Such visits promote the core British values of tolerance and respect for others extremely well.

You set high expectations of pupils' behaviour through the establishment of agreed whole-school values. These values are very evident around the school and are promoted further through assemblies. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite to adults and visitors. There is a sense of community and purpose throughout the school. Pupils say that they trust the staff and know that they will look after them.

Your vision for the school is shared by governors and staff alike. Priorities for further improvement are clear within the school's long-term plan. Teachers with subject responsibility refer to these when generating separate action plans for improvement in their areas of responsibility. Regular monitoring by you and governors evaluates effectively the impact of these improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. School leaders and governors ensure that robust procedures for the safety and well-being of all pupils are applied with rigour. Regular training in safeguarding ensures that staff are fully up to date with all safeguarding requirements and the latest government guidance.

Senior leaders with specific responsibility for child protection work very closely with staff from other agencies when any safeguarding concerns arise. The progress of the most vulnerable pupils is monitored very closely to ensure that their needs are fully catered for. Records relating to child protection are of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and governors are relentless in their determination to implement further improvements within the school for the benefit of all pupils and the local community. They use a wide range of strategies well to monitor the school's work. Self-evaluation is accurate and used very effectively to support planning for further improvement.
- You and subject leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement throughout the school. The results of this monitoring are used effectively to inform subsequent actions, including the design of further support for pupils and training for all staff.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Pupils' reading skills are developed very well from the outset in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this continues through the school. As a result, standards in reading by the end of Year 6 are well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils whose writing meets age-related expectations by the end of Year 2 is greater than that seen nationally. Letter formation is correct and most of these pupils are developing a neat, flowing style. This good progress is sustained throughout Years 3 to 6. As a result, the vast majority of pupils in Year 6 can write at the expected level and over half exceed this.

- Even so, scrutiny of pupils' work from Year 3 to Year 6 confirms that there remain some weaker aspects of writing. There is still some variability in the quality of handwriting and some pupils still make too many simple mistakes in their spelling and punctuation. The subject leader for English has rightly identified that these mistakes are not picked up consistently by all teachers in their marking, as required by the school's policy. Inaccuracy in pupils' writing therefore remains one of the school's areas for improvement.
- Teachers are implementing the changes to the new National Curriculum for mathematics well. As a result, there is a much stronger emphasis in lessons on problem solving than in the past. Evidence in pupils' books confirms that good opportunities are provided for pupils to master new concepts before moving on to the next. Pupils in Year 6 say that this has given them greater confidence in mathematics to tackle more difficult calculations and take the first steps in algebra. However, these improvements in mathematics are yet to be fully realised in a greater proportion of pupils attaining above age-related expectations in the end of Key Stage 2 national assessment tests.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment is effective, being monitored and recorded accurately against age-related criteria. This information is analysed regularly to support good lesson planning and track the progress of individual pupils.
- All pupils receive regular feedback from teachers about how well they are doing in English and mathematics. With the exceptions already noted, marking is thorough and supports pupils' progress well.
- Disadvantaged pupils in receipt of the pupil premium (government funding for those pupils eligible for free school meals) make good progress. This funding is used well to provide a wide range of carefully targeted support. As a result, gaps in achievement are narrowing when compared with similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good and often outstanding progress. Teachers ensure that work is carefully planned to meet the needs of these pupils. Teaching assistants provide focused support for these pupils in lessons or in small groups.
- Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children make good progress in all areas of learning. A strong emphasis is placed on the children learning through play. Their progress is monitored carefully by the teacher. The use of the outdoor environment and local walks are strong features of this provision.

- A broad, balanced and vibrant curriculum is planned by teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2. Well-planned lessons and imaginative themes excite pupils about what they are learning. For instance, pupils in Year 6 talk with great enthusiasm about acting out plays by Shakespeare, making plates in the style of Clarice Cliff and growing vegetables in the new garden area.
- A good range of extra sporting activities outside lessons develops pupils' positive attitudes towards living a healthy lifestyle. These activities include a trampoline club and competitive matches against other schools.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school. The British values of democracy and respect for others are fully reflected in the positive relationships between pupils and adults and pupils themselves. Good behaviour is rewarded effectively and any misbehaviour is managed well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils exceeding age-related expectations in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 is as high as that in English
- marking and feedback are used well to improve the accuracy of pupils' spelling and punctuation
- all teachers set high expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

A range of documents was scrutinised and all classes were observed jointly with you. Further meetings were held with you, teachers with a subject leadership responsibility, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a representative from the local authority. The school's safeguarding arrangements were examined closely. Discussions were also held with a group of pupils from Year 6 about their work. The inspector met informally with some parents. The inspector reviewed 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 20 free text messages. There were 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.