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Mr Steve Hollingshurst
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hollingshurst

Short inspection of Milton Parochial Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 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 October 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have been in post since the year following the last inspection and have been successful in navigating the school through many changes. The school became an academy in February 2015, as part of the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust. There have also been many staff changes over time. More recently, you have worked closely with the governors and the trust to put a new leadership and management structure in place.

You have taken on a part-time executive role, with day-to-day leadership being led by the newly promoted head of teaching and learning, and a senior teacher who is also responsible for special educational needs. The academy trust has worked effectively with both you and the governors to ensure that staff promotions have been carefully considered and roles and responsibilities are clear. They are supporting you well to ensure the new leadership team has appropriate training and guidance.

You are held in high regard by staff, pupils, parents and carers, and governors alike. You have been highly successful in maintaining the community's confidence in the school. The senior leadership team has a clear understanding of effective teaching and learning.

Leaders have had an ongoing focus to continually improve teaching since the last inspection of the predecessor school. Good teaching has been sustained during recent staffing changes. This has been achieved through careful recruitment and effective deployment of more experienced staff to provide sustained support.

Governors are well informed. They have an accurate understanding of the school. They check what is reported to them and use their skills effectively to challenge and support leaders.

The small numbers and different characteristics of pupils in year groups limit the reliability of comparing the school's results in national assessments with national averages. However, it is possible to say that outcomes in reading have been consistently strong across the school over time and pupils' progress in writing has been weaker over the same period. Continuing to accelerate pupils' progress in writing is a high priority in the school's improvement plan, and effective actions led to the most able writers achieving well in 2017. Leaders know the progress for less-confident learners is not as strong. Evidence from lessons and pupils' books indicates that these pupils are not consistently clear on how to improve their work.

Parents particularly value the welcoming family ethos of the school. They have a very high level of confidence in how well the school cares for and teaches their children. Pupils are valued as important individuals.

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy the wide range of interesting opportunities that the school offers them. Pupils are enthusiastic school councillors and enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as assembly helpers and being buddies to new pupils. Pupils particularly enjoy representing the school at sports tournaments, learning musical instruments and being part of the school band and choir. They told the inspector that teachers are helping them to 'stick at it' in their learning.

Pupils' behaviour across all times of the school day is a particular strength. Pupils are respectful and caring of each other and told the inspector, 'friends are always caring'. They speak confidently and politely to visitors.

Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that attendance is in line with national averages. They are continuing to ensure that parents are aware of the school's attendance policy.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard and ensure the welfare of pupils. You have ensured appropriate training for all staff. Staff are confident to report any concerns they have about children. Records are detailed and of a high quality. When appropriate, the school works closely and constructively with outside agencies.

You and your staff know the pupils and families well. Staff are alert to changes and

quick to make adaptations or offer support when needed.

Pupils say they feel safe and trust adults to act quickly to help sort out any problems, as, they say, 'we're all a big family' and there is 'an adult around every corner'.

Inspection findings

- You have ensured that all staff, including those new to the school, have a consistent approach to routines and expectations. We saw this in our visits to all classrooms, when talking with pupils and looking in their books. Teachers and pupils have very positive relationships. Classrooms and learning areas are attractive and well organised. Displays provide helpful prompts and guides which are consistently referred to by teachers.
- Teachers use interesting texts, often linked to topics, as a stimulus to encourage pupils' purposeful writing. They are consistent in ensuring that they follow the school's systematic approaches to teaching grammar, punctuation and spelling. They are making sure that pupils are aware of the importance of applying the skills they have learned in their writing tasks. However, teachers are not using assessments sufficiently precisely to guide all pupils to be able to improve and deepen their understanding as well as they could, as the school's assessment policy requires.
- In mathematics, you have ensured that teachers plan effectively for clear progression in building up pupils' number and calculation skills. Teachers are consistent in planning opportunities for pupils to reason and apply their number skills to problems, in line with school policy. They are using practical materials to help develop pupils' understanding. However, teachers are not consistently showing pupils who are less-confident learners how to break down problems and to deepen their understanding. Leaders recognise there is still more work to do to improve this aspect of teaching, with further training planned.
- The inclusion leader works closely and effectively with pupils, parents, colleagues and external providers to ensure that barriers to learning are carefully addressed. Individual additional support plans are kept under continual review.
- The school's commitment to develop staff talent is evident in the recent reorganisation of senior and middle leadership responsibilities. My discussions with new leaders showed there is a clear understanding of current priorities, commitment and capacity to fulfil identified roles. Initial improvements are clear in the increased rigour of monitoring and evaluation, involving all leaders. This has sharpened focus on pupils' outcomes across the school. Leadership capacity has been strengthened by the changes, but additional responsibilities are not, as yet, fully implemented.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers follow consistently the school policy to use assessment effectively to give precise feedback to show pupils how to improve their work and deepen their understanding

- teachers precisely plan sequences of learning that build pupils' confidence to reason mathematically
- new leadership and management arrangements are embedded to continue to improve pupils' outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Peterborough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mandy Wilding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the head of teaching and learning, and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with the leader for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and other teachers with leadership responsibilities. I met with the chair of the governing body and other governors. I also met with two representatives of Peterborough Diocese Education Trust. I visited lessons in each class at least once, accompanied by you or the head of teaching and learning, with seven visits in all. We examined samples of pupils' work and talked with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. I listened to pupils read and spoke with a group of pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and during lessons.

In addition, I scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including those relating to pupils' progress, the school's improvement planning, its self-evaluation and documents relating to safeguarding. I spoke with 10 parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 30 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 27 responses to Ofsted's free-text service. I also considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses from pupils to consider.