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Ms Emily Wright
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Ms Wright

Short inspection of Stepney Greencoat Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 2017, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. To ensure consistent leadership, the governors appointed you as interim headteacher at the start of this term, to cover for the previous headteacher, who is currently absent and will retire at the end of the summer term. You will then take up the permanent position from September 2017. A strong team of staff supports you and shares the school's ethos of 'helping children to flourish'.

Senior leaders have supported middle leaders to develop the skills needed to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Middle leaders ensure that teachers have the skills to track progress, teach high-quality lessons and give insightful feedback to pupils. Through Parent View, the online survey, one parent said, 'We are so happy with the education that our children are currently receiving at Stepney Greencoat.' The school has strong links within the local community through the school's status as a faith school.

The previous inspection report identified inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and that subject leaders should become more involved in monitoring teaching and learning. The development of middle leaders has been effective and improved both these aspects.

Well-trained staff use their skills appropriately to support pupils by correcting misconceptions. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud and a locally developed reading scheme is used well to teach phonics thoroughly.

Adults are respectful to pupils and pupils are similarly encouraged to treat each other respectfully. For example, a thoughtful debate, examining the rules of a playground game, was successfully used to enhance writing in the classroom and to stimulate a positive discussion on conflict resolution.

Leaders have recently put strategies in place to tackle the higher than national rates of absence and persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. However, it is too soon to see any impact.

The governors are fully committed to improving the quality of the provision offered by the school. They seek advice when needed and make strategic decisions that ensure that the leadership and management have the capacity to improve the school. Governors undertake their statutory duties well and review policies regularly. Governors make sure that the school undertakes its safeguarding duties effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The required policies and procedures are in place and support staff in making sure that all pupils are safe. Pupils spoken to during the inspection say that they feel safe and happy and know whom to speak to if they have an issue.

The designated safeguarding lead is well supported by skilled colleagues. They ensure that all staff receive regular and up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff know what signs to look out for and whom to speak to should they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders and governors are trained in safer recruitment and use these skills to ensure that staff have the correct background checks.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, you and I agreed to focus on three key lines of enquiry. The initial focus was on attendance, where you have taken actions to address the higher than average absenteeism and persistent absence of pupils. The initiatives have not yet shown a significant improvement in attendance because these strategies have only recently been put in place.
- Absence rates have reduced slightly from autumn 2016 to spring 2017 and current rates of absence show an improvement on previous years. Absence rates need to reduce further in order to be in line with those of similar schools nationally.

- The second line of enquiry was to ensure that leaders, through their evaluation and planning, were maintaining a strong focus on pupils' progress and attainment. Governors have been heavily involved in monitoring the school's performance with the support of the school improvement partner. The standards committee is using information about pupils' learning and results to challenge the school more robustly. There are plans in place to maintain and improve outcomes and you are currently in the process of updating the school evaluation document in time for September 2017.
- The final line of enquiry looked at the rates of progress of different groups of pupils, particularly those pupils who were behind their peers. Support for pupils at key stage 2 with prior underperformance is relatively strong, but a small number of groups in key stage 1, despite progress beginning to accelerate, have still to reach their potential. Work seen in books during the inspection supports the accuracy of the school's assessment of which groups require support.
- Outcomes in phonics are above the national average for all groups of pupils in Year 1. This helps pupils to read confidently. Reading, writing and particularly mathematics results at key stage 2 are consistently strong because of the improved teaching led by middle leaders. The sharing of good practice within the school is having a positive impact.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance rates for all groups of pupils increase, so that they are in line with the national average
- progress across key stage 1 for underperforming groups accelerates, so that their attainment continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Hughes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out the following activities:

- met with you at the beginning of the day and discussed the major strengths and weaknesses of the school, where we agreed the key lines of enquiry that I would be following
- was introduced to members of staff at your daily briefing, where I outlined the activities that I would be undertaking
- met with members of your governing body, including the chair of governors and the chair of the standards committee, your school improvement partner and a representative from the London Diocesan Board for Schools
- examined the school's arrangements for safeguarding and the procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe
- met with middle leaders, completed a scrutiny of pupils' work, carried out a learning walk alongside senior leaders and listened to pupils read
- considered the views of 38 parents who responded to the Ofsted survey.