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Mrs S Edward
Headteacher
St Philip's Church of England Primary School
Hampton Road
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Dear Mrs Edward

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

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 June 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 have ensured that the school has weathered the storm of staffing changes and have set a culture of ambition for pupils at the school. You are an inspirational leader who has established a highly effective senior leadership team. Your compassion for pupils is shared by the staff and governors, all of whom highly value your leadership. Governors embrace the strong Christian character of the school as a yardstick for decision-making: they govern with moral purpose. They ensure that they value the staff of the school by investing in their development. They are knowledgeable about the achievement of pupils and provide a good balance of challenge and support for senior leaders.

Pupils enjoy learning because of both the excellent relationships they have with the adults in the school and the engaging curriculum. Teachers plan interesting tasks, the results of which are celebrated in displays around the school. Pupils are tenacious, take pride in their work and are keen to improve their progress. You provide pupils with opportunities to lead different aspects of school life such as supporting behaviour and leading assemblies. Consequently, pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school community. However, as part of the inspection we agreed that the information available to parents on the content of the curriculum does not truly reflect its strength.

The previous inspection asked the school to improve the quality of teaching. This formed a focus for this inspection and was found to be a strength of the school. Staff are more effective in supporting pupils to achieve because of the training that they receive.

Teachers provide clear feedback and targets so that pupils have greater ownership of their work. However, although pupils are engaged, we agreed that their participation could be developed further if they are challenged to achieve even more in their writing. We also agreed that improving the quality of pupils' vocabulary would help them to write with greater effect.

The majority of parents are positive about the school. Many parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, echoed the view expressed by one who said that 'children are happy and enjoy attending every day because they are supported as individuals.' However, a small minority raised concerns about behaviour in the school. You have ensured that clear systems to tackle this are in place. Staff act swiftly to make sure that instances of unacceptable behaviour are not repeated. Your commitment to meeting the needs of every child ensures that appropriate support is put in place to enable pupils to improve their behaviour where necessary. Pupils feel safe because of the high level of care and support that they receive from staff. They are understanding of each other's needs and differences.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding leader, you champion the needs of pupils above all else. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff have a clear understanding of their duties and there is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. The pupils I spoke to say that they feel safe in school. They value the relationships that they have with staff and appreciate the high levels of care and attention that staff provide.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe because of frequent assemblies and visits from guest speakers. Pupils' keen awareness of online safety is due to the effective teaching that they receive.

Inspection findings

- The first key line of enquiry that we agreed was to look at how effectively pupils in key stage 2 are challenged to achieve the highest standards in their writing. The work in pupils' books shows that they make good progress. They write with purpose and have opportunities to practise their skills in other subjects. However, pupils' choice of vocabulary lacks the sparkle that would enable them to elevate the quality of their writing. Some of the more able pupils I spoke to identified this as an area they would like to improve upon. This has also been recognised by leaders. Governors' strong grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses ensures that they understand the next steps, including in the development of pupils' writing. This is because highly effective link governors meet regularly with subject leaders and keep the governing body well informed.
- We also agreed to look at how effectively leaders adapt the design of the curriculum to promote pupils' progress in history and computing. Assessment systems are in place for history and computing. Middle leaders use these well to track pupils' achievements and highlight areas for subject development. For example, the lead for computing has identified that pupils' basic skills with a computer are not as well developed as their

control with touchscreen devices. As such, there has been a concerted focus on the development of these skills. In history, pupils have choices over which aspects of history they study. For example, some Year 6 pupils elected to write about Dr Barnardo while others wrote about Victorian toilets. The history subject leader has implemented some innovative strategies, such as chronological buddies who work with younger children on their chronological ordering skills. Older pupils can also apply to become history advocates to promote the subject in the school. These initiatives have raised the profile of history while stimulating pupils' thirst for knowledge. Pupils make good progress in history and computing and they are enthusiastic about their learning. We agreed that the curriculum information on the school's website does not reflect the depth of study in these subjects. As such, some parents may not have a clear understanding of the skills that their children are developing.

- Finally, we agreed to look at how effectively leaders have developed the skills of teaching assistants and middle leaders. Teaching assistants feel valued because leaders are investing in developing their professional skills. They feel that they have ownership of their role and are beginning to lead their own development by sharing good practice with one another. The inspection evidence bears this out. Teaching assistants are highly effective because they are knowledgeable about pupils' academic and personal development needs. Where learning is most effective, teaching assistants skilfully question to develop pupils' individual skills. Similarly, middle leaders feel empowered to lead their own subjects. Governors are committed to providing staff with opportunities to develop their teaching and leadership skills. They provide staff with opportunities to visit other schools to see examples of good practice. Well thought-out staff development is giving momentum to improvements aimed at providing pupils with better outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more detailed information about the school's curriculum is shared with parents so they know which skills their children are learning to use in each subject
- pupils' participation in learning is enhanced so that they are challenged to make even greater progress in their writing
- teachers focus on extending pupils' use of vocabulary to enhance the quality of their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. Together, we visited all classes and spoke to pupils informally about their work during lessons. I heard pupils read their own and others' work as part of classroom activities. I reviewed documentation about safeguarding, which included the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I spoke with pupils about safeguarding, behaviour and different aspects of their history and computing work. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' writing and history work. I reviewed examples of pupils' work in computing. I analysed leaders' records of the monitoring of teaching and learning; governing body minutes; the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses; and the school development plan. I took into account 36 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 14 responses to the staff survey.