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30 May 2018

Miss J Kinch
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Kinch

Short inspection of St Philip's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 the school was judged to be good in June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You joined the school as headteacher in September 2017 and have worked tirelessly to put in place effective systems to promote school improvement. You are very ably supported by an experienced and dedicated deputy headteacher who joined the school with you. The governing body has recently restructured and undertaken training to ensure that the support and challenge being provided to leaders are focused closely on areas where the need is greatest.

Your vision for the school is shared by all leaders. You are aware that the majority of pupils enter school with skills that are below those typical for their age. This is most notable in the areas of speech and language. Mobility is high and many pupils speak English as an additional language. You noted that you want your pupils to aim high and leaders and teachers work with them to raise their aspirations.

Your pupils are proud to be members of the 'Sparkle Group', which focuses on how Christian values can be promoted through school activities. This involves taking part in the leadership of collective worship. You have developed strong links with your local church and members of the church who, in turn, support your school through a broad range of activities aimed at further developing the community links that you all hold so dear.

In the previous inspection, inspectors noted that leaders should provide high levels of challenge for the most able pupils. Much work has been done in this area, and some success has been seen. In 2017, for the first time, children in Reception

gained the exceeding levels when assessed against the good level of development expected of this age group. Additionally, the school's most recent published performance information shows that the progress that the most able pupils made in writing was in the top 30% seen nationally at key stage 2. However, leaders' own evaluation accurately highlights that further work is required to ensure that this success is built on so that the most able pupils receive consistently high levels of challenge.

Inspectors also highlighted that attendance needed to be improved, particularly for those who are persistently absent from school. Leaders have been successful in dealing with this issue. The family liaison officer works closely with pupils and their families to offer support and guidance related to attendance. Pupils are proud of the gold, silver and bronze badges that they receive when their attendance is above the national average. You also ensure that families are aware of the fact that unauthorised absence is not accepted and that leaders will take action where this occurs. As a consequence of these actions, attendance rates have improved and persistent absence rates have reduced over the last two years. Finally, inspectors also noted that further opportunities were required to enable subject leaders to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. We agreed to discuss this as part of the inspection.

During the inspection, we considered areas where further work is required to support your school's improvement. You are aware that the role of subject leaders requires further refinement to ensure that they use assessment information effectively to support them in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. Additionally, the level of challenge in reading and writing provided to all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, needs to increase to ensure that attainment rises by the end of key stage 2. Finally, a broader range of opportunities need to be provided for all pupils to develop their writing skills across all other areas of the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your school site is secure. Leaders and staff undertake regular training to ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge of procedures to keep pupils safe. Governors are also knowledgeable about safeguarding and take their role seriously.

Visitors are checked on entry, and internal areas of school are further protected by electronic locks. Pupils value this extra security and told me during the inspection that they feel safe in school. Pupils also value the work that is done to support their well-being. Every pupil who responded to the inspection survey noted that their school encourages them to look after their emotional and mental health.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed a number of lines of enquiry. The first considered the impact of leaders' efforts to develop pupils' skills in phonics. You

have identified that many children enter school with communication and language skills that are below those typical for their age. To address this issue, you now begin the teaching of phonics from the moment that children enter school in the early years. You have provided teachers and teaching assistants with training to ensure that teaching is effective. You also run well-attended workshops for parents and carers so that they can support their children's reading at home. As a result of this work, there is a rising trend in the number of children who pass the phonic screening check at the end of Year 1. We agreed, however, that children's learning could be further developed by providing them with reading books to take home, which reinforce the sounds they are currently learning at school.

- You have introduced a new assessment and tracking system. The system is detailed and ensures that leaders and teachers can now track the progress that all groups of pupils are making. Leaders now meet regularly with teachers to analyse performance information and discuss the progress of all groups of pupils. As a result of these meetings, help is provided to pupils who need additional support, and this is developing their skills. However, we agreed that teachers need to embed further their use of this assessment and tracking system to aid them when setting appropriate levels of challenge for pupils in lessons.
- My next line of enquiry considered what leaders are doing to improve outcomes in reading, particularly at key stage 2. You identified that, for many pupils, limited vocabulary is a barrier to their learning. This is most notable for the disadvantaged pupils. As a consequence, you ensure that your school environment is rich in literature. This raises the profile of reading and promotes a rich and varied vocabulary. High-quality fiction and non-fiction books are displayed in classrooms and around the building. Reading for pleasure is encouraged. Teachers write about their favourite books to promote the enjoyment of reading. All classes share a class book, and activities such as your 'bookworm' challenge, which enables pupils to earn bronze, silver and gold badges for regular reading, encourage pupils to read widely and often. Opportunities to extend vocabulary are provided effectively in all classes, including your language resource unit. As a result, pupils' vocabulary is improving and they are developing a love of reading.
- The next area we looked at was what leaders are doing to ensure that boys make consistently good progress to extend their writing skills. You have identified that there has, historically, been a lack of motivation to write for many boys. You are addressing this issue by altering the way in which writing is taught. Writing is now linked to high-quality, engaging reading texts. This is to ensure that boys are fully involved in their learning. Topic titles have been altered to appeal to boys and girls. As a consequence, you are seeing signs of improvement for boys. This is apparent in your most recent school performance information, which shows that the gap between boys and girls is narrowing in some classes. Nevertheless, leaders remain aware that pupils, especially the boys, need to develop their stamina for writing. We agreed when we looked at pupils' books that further opportunities are required for pupils to practise their writing skills across other subjects in the curriculum.

- My next line of enquiry considered the support being offered to disadvantaged pupils. Your new assessment and tracking system is being used by teachers and leaders to identify and address the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils. This group is a particular focus during your pupil progress meetings. You use pupil premium funding in an effective manner to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the additional support they require to meet their targets. For example, additional language support is provided because leaders identify this as a considerable barrier to their learning. Funding is also spent to ensure that these pupils have access to experiences beyond school, which develop further their vocabulary and give them experiences to write about. As a consequence, progress is being made. In some year groups, disadvantaged pupils are now outperforming non-disadvantaged pupils at the higher levels in reading.
- During the inspection, we discussed the role of subject leaders. The effectiveness of this group has been hampered by a high level of staff mobility over the past few years. However, subject leaders are now working in an effective manner with governors and with senior leaders to evaluate the strengths and areas for development in their subjects. You are currently working to ensure that subject leaders develop their skills in monitoring learning. This is being linked in an effective manner to your new assessment and tracking system. You rightly note that further time is required to ensure that subject leaders embed and further refine their role so that monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning begin to have a stronger impact on pupils' progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further refine the role of the subject leader to ensure that these post-holders have the necessary skills to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in a confident and effective manner
- teachers develop their use of assessment and tracking data so that the level of challenge for all groups of pupils increases at both the expected and the higher levels in reading and writing
- teachers are given the appropriate training so that they are able to provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the family liaison officer, the learning mentor and the business manager. I met with the subject leaders to discuss pupils' current performance in school. I also met with the school's local authority quality assurance officer. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils.

Accompanied by you, I visited classes across the school including your language resource provision. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning and current performance information. I took account of the two responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 26 responses to the staff survey and 20 responses to the pupil survey. I also considered information posted on the school's website.