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Mr Joy
St Philip's Church of England Primary School
Bloomfield Rise
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Dear Mr Joy

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

Following my visit to the school on 1 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 your school was judged to be good in March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. It provides an extremely nurturing and caring environment where the pupils feel valued. One parent summed up the ethos and culture of the school by explaining that, 'St Philips is an extremely well run and friendly school with excellent Christian values. Morale among teachers and support staff seems high, and my children feel secure and very happy here'.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the way that teachers assess pupils' work. The school's marking policy is used consistently throughout the school and is understood by all pupils. Pupils are very clear about what they are learning and know what they are aiming to achieve.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were also asked to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. Shortly afterwards, you appointed a new Early Years Foundation Stage leader who has a secure knowledge and understanding of the way that young children learn. A new self-evaluation framework is specifically designed to help early years teaching staff develop and improve the quality and effectiveness of their provision. You and your Reception staff have been able to reflect on best practice and have improved the organisation of the day and made significant improvements to the outdoor learning area. By attending a range of training events, seeking specialist support from the local authority and working closely with other local schools, early years teaching staff have improved the way they support their children's learning. For example, they have adapted their approach to the teaching of mathematics to make it more meaningful, visual and

engaging. As a result of all these improvements, outcomes for the children at the end of their time in the Early Years Foundation have improved dramatically. A greater proportion of children than seen nationally are attaining a good level of development by the time they leave Reception. This means that they are well prepared for Year 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. You and your governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make sure that all adults who regularly come into contact with pupils are carefully checked and trained. Records are detailed and meticulously maintained. This helps to ensure that pupils are protected and kept safe in school. Any issues raised by staff are carefully logged and closely monitored. Good working relationships with external agencies, such as social services, support the work you do to promote the well-being of all your pupils.

The school offers a safe environment, which is acknowledged by parents. They are confident that members of staff know their children well and keep a close eye out for any concerns. Pupils report that they feel safe and point out that they feel particularly comfortable approaching teachers with any worries or concerns. If any anti-social behaviour should occur, the pupils are very clear about what steps they need to take. They understand the importance of e-safety and would not hesitate to inform an adult if an inappropriate email or website appeared on their computer screen.

You and your staff have attended 'Prevent' training, which is a government initiative to promote an awareness of any form of extremism. Although governors have yet to attend 'Prevent' training, they have ensured that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to deal with any such matters should they arise.

Inspection findings

- It is clear that you and your deputy headteacher work very well together. Your strong working partnership and your individual strengths are used to lead and manage the school effectively. Parents hold you both in high esteem and praise you for the way that you manage an 'amazing team'.
- Over the past few years, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, mathematics and spelling, punctuation and grammar have improved considerably. This is because you have taken steps to ensure that the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 is consistently strong. You and your deputy headteacher meet with class teachers regularly to check out individual pupils' performance. You both ensure that the teachers have a clear understanding of what they need to do next to develop further the pupils' knowledge and skills.

- Standards in writing have not been as good as those in other subjects, and this has been particularly so for girls. You have taken effective steps to improve the quality of girls' writing. Teachers have encouraged them to write more by giving them more opportunities to choose topics that interest them. Girls who are more-able writers have benefited from working at the local secondary school. This has motivated and encouraged them to write in more depth and to a higher standard.
- You and your governors know that unavoidable staff absences have impacted on standards at the end of Key Stage 1 over the past few years. You have effectively tackled any gaps in the learning of those pupils who were affected by these periods of inconsistency by providing additional support. I confirmed during my visit that the standards of those pupils affected by the long-term uncertainty in Key Stage 1 are currently in line with expectations for their Key Stage 2 age group.
- The wider school focus on writing has had impressive results. Pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are good. Pupils' literacy books show they are able to write well for different purposes. Work books in other subjects do not have such a wide range of writing. The consistent approach to the marking of work has supported the improvements made in writing. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and are able to make changes and learn from their mistakes. You have emphasised the importance of the presentation of work in books and this has also had a strong impact on the improvement of pupils' writing across the school. Work in pupils' books is typically neatly presented with well-formed letters and legible script.
- Over the past few years, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have not been as good as they could have been. You have effectively tackled any gaps in the learning of these pupils by providing additional support.
- The results of your most recent Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) screening check are very impressive, with nearly all your pupils achieving the expected standard. This is well above the national average. Teaching staff have all been trained in using a consistent approach to the teaching of letters and sounds and this ensures that pupils do not receive mixed messages. Teaching is organised so that pupils work at a level appropriate to their needs. Using letters and sounds alongside the development of the pupils' ability to write for a purpose is helping them to improve these skills and make links in their learning.
- Teachers are good role models for the pupils they teach. They have high expectations and demonstrate effective ways of working. As one parent explained, 'staff show themselves to be dedicated to their work and the pupils in their care. Pupils are happy, well taught and continue to make good progress'.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. They are very enthusiastic about the topics they learn about such as 'Early Civilization' and 'Life in Victorian times' and take full advantage of the numerous trips and visits they experience. The quality of the work they

produce from these educational visits is impressive, especially the writing and the art work.

- Pupils have a clear understanding of what is acceptable and not acceptable behaviour. They are very polite and courteous and sensibly take on different responsibilities, such as house captains and buddies for the younger pupils. They are extremely respectful and understand the need to attend what is known in school as a session for 'fundamentals'. These sessions are designed to support an area that individual pupils need to improve, such as infrequent reading habits or help with cooperation skills.
- The topics they learn support their development of British values. Pupils know that when they apply to be a member of the school council, they are required to follow the basic rules of democracy. This includes applying for a position, presenting their reasons for selection and taking part in a vote.
- You and your deputy headteacher keep a close eye on pupils' attendance and are quick to check up on any absences. If absences go without notification, you are swift to make contact with parents and robustly follow up any concerns.
- Your governors are ambitious and support the work of the school well. They are not afraid to challenge senior leaders and do this with confidence because they are knowledgeable about what happens in school. This is because they make frequent visits into school and make themselves available to parents during regular 'governor surgery' times.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and are very clear about the areas that need improving. For example, they are fully aware of the improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2 and are carefully checking the progress made by those pupils affected by the Key Stage 1 staffing issues. However, although governors know that most parents feel fully engaged in school life, they are aware of the small minority who would appreciate more information on their children's progress.
- Those parents who completed the online Parent View questionnaire and submitted comments indicated that the vast majority are delighted with all aspects of their children's education. One parent summed up the views of other parents by explaining that the school 'is brilliant and caring ... my child thrives in every way – physically, emotionally, socially, mentally and especially intellectually'. However, a very small minority of parents did consider that communication between home and school was not strong.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils develop their writing skills further in subjects beyond literacy
- ways to improve communication between home and school are further explored to ensure that all parents feel fully engaged with the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells and the Director of Children's Services for Bath and North East Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher and we discussed improvements since the previous inspection and the progress pupils are making. We also discussed your self-evaluation and the initiatives you were taking to further school improvement. I held discussions with your middle leaders and four governors, including the Chair of Governors. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. We visited all the classes and looked at books together. I met with a group of pupils and reviewed the comments made by staff on the online questionnaire. I looked at the survey results from Parent View and considered the comments that I received from parents.