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Jane White
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Dear Ms White

Short inspection of The Priory CofE School

Following my visit to the school on 5 October 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2011.

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 successfully created a welcoming, harmonious and caring atmosphere and have secured a culture of high expectations among the staff. There is strong support for leadership among staff and their morale is high. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the online survey, Parent View, agree that pupils are taught well and looked after effectively. Staff were equally positive in their responses to a staff questionnaire. The pupils that the inspector met said they love their school.

You have high expectations and are ambitious for all pupils at the school. The staff and governors share your aspirations and are highly committed to ensuring that pupils do well. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive; this helps pupils in their learning and supports their well-being.

You, other leaders and the governing body work effectively together to drive improvements and to ensure that the school continues to improve. You have successfully raised pupils' achievement in mathematics, the area for improvement from the last inspection.

Governors are highly skilled and knowledgeable; the governing body keeps a close check on the work of the school. Governors support and challenge you effectively to

bring about improvements.

Middle leaders contribute effectively to the whole-school improvement plan. Subject leaders for mathematics and English are involved in checking the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make.

Taken together, the successes resulting from the work of senior and middle leaders and the governing body indicate that the school has the capacity to improve further.

The local authority provides the school with minimal advice and support because it rightly considers your school to be good. Furthermore, the local authority accurately judges that the school's leaders demonstrate a strong capacity to sustain and improve on the good quality of education provided.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have successfully created a culture where staff and pupils feel safe and valued. Almost all parents responding to the online survey, Parent View, agree that their children feel safe at school and are looked after well. Pupils that the inspector met said that they feel safe and are easily able to approach a member of staff if they have any concerns about their safety. They are taught well about unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils said that behaviour is good and bullying is not an issue for the school.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are effective. Staff have received training on the current updated policy on safeguarding and child protection procedures. Staff and governors have completed the training on the 'Prevent' duty and show a good understanding of the need to be vigilant about extremism and radicalisation. Governors are highly committed to keeping children safe and free from harm and ensure that staff receive regular updates on safeguarding and child protection matters. Governors make their own checks on safeguarding arrangements, including ensuring that checks on the suitability of staff are fully in place. Leaders ensure that safeguarding documents, records, processes and procedures are fit for purpose and successfully implemented.

Inspection findings

- Pupils enjoy reading and are encouraged to read widely. The inspector met pupils in Years 2 and 6 to discuss their reading and listen to them read. They said that they 'love reading' and read with enthusiasm and expression. Pupils in Year 2 said that they used their knowledge of phonics to read unfamiliar or difficult words. Pupils make strong progress in reading throughout the school and their reading test results at the end of Year 6 were above average in 2016.
- In writing, the results at the end of Year 6 in 2016 were not as good as in mathematics and reading. Results at the end of key stage 1 suggest that writing has been weaker than mathematics and reading over the last three years.

- Through your close checks on the school's assessment information, you have identified that pupils' progress in writing in key stages 1 and 2 is sometimes slower than in mathematics and reading. You already have plans in place to ensure that pupils' progress in writing is as strong as in reading and mathematics.
- You and I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and checked their books. Pupils, especially in the upper part of key stage 2, are already making improvements in their writing through opportunities to write at length and for different purposes. Leaders are rightly focusing on providing pupils with more opportunities to write in different subjects, and to experience a wider range of forms and styles of writing as they develop their skills.
- The differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally increased at the end of key stage 2 in 2016, particularly in mathematics.
- Through your regular analysis of attainment and progress, including your meetings with staff to check their pupils' progress, you and other leaders also know that some disadvantaged pupils are not currently making the same strong progress in mathematics as their classmates.
- You and other leaders have already been successful in targeting effective support for disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 and 4 in 2015 through deploying additional skilled staff, including experienced teachers. This has had a marked impact on improving the progress of this group of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This targeted support is now being widened throughout the school in key stages 1 and 2.
- Through our book checks and discussions, including my meeting with the subject leader for mathematics, we agreed that sometimes learning moves on too fast for these pupils before they have consolidated their knowledge of mathematical concepts.
- Your information shows that the most able disadvantaged pupils make good and sometimes rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils overall is the key priority for the school. We agreed that this is the main reason why the school remains good and is not outstanding.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been low and their attendance in 2016 was in the lowest 10% of all mainstream schools nationally. I was also mindful of the link between pupils' attendance and their progress, particularly as one of my key lines of enquiry was to do with the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- You and other leaders have been successful in improving pupils' attendance overall through celebrating and rewarding good attendance and by following up poor attendance with parents. Pupils' attendance was above average in 2015/16 with the vast majority of pupils having high attendance. However, your own information shows that attendance is not improving quickly enough for some disadvantaged pupils and it remains markedly lower than that of their classmates.
- I also considered how the school promotes British values and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. It is clear that the school's work on

promoting British values and preparing pupils for life in modern Britain is effective. Pupils are taught about British values through learning about the rule of law, democracy and respecting different points of view. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions represented in the British society and respect for diversity.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make the same strong progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics
- the difference in attainment for the disadvantaged pupils in mathematics at key stage 2 is diminished so that they do as well as other pupils nationally
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is as good as their classmates.

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

Yours sincerely

Avtar Sherri
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 2, particularly in mathematics
- the progress of pupils in writing in key stages 1 and 2
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- the effectiveness of safeguarding
- the school's work on promoting British values and preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.

I carried out a range of activities to explore these areas during the inspection. I met with you; other senior leaders and subject leaders; five governors, including the chair of the governing body; and a representative of the local authority. I listened to pupils in Years 2 and 6 read and discussed their reading with them. I spoke with pupils in lessons, during breaktime and in a group consisting of 12 pupils from key stage 2.

You and I jointly observed the learning in six lessons and looked at pupils' work in their books. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and documents. I also considered other school information and documentation, including information about pupils' attainment and progress in each year group, the school's improvement plans and self-evaluation statements. I examined the school's website for policies and information and to see whether it met the requirements on the publication of information. I looked at your attendance information. You, the deputy headteacher and I undertook a book scrutiny. I also took into account the views of 73 parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, and 32 responses to a questionnaire completed by staff.