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Dear Mrs Hilton

Short inspection of Castle Hill St Philip's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 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 inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2012.

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 kept the successful focus of the school upon its motto of 'Caring, sharing and learning together with God'. Pupils are given good opportunities to learn about the beliefs and behaviours of the Christian faith, as well as to understand the views and values of others. You have continued to make sure that pupils benefit from a broad and well-considered range of learning in classrooms, breakfast club, after-school clubs and through school trips. This is because you and staff are ambitious for pupils to develop the many skills and abilities they need for their life in modern Britain. Pupils increasingly achieve well and staff and leaders are quick to celebrate pupils' learning and increased self-belief and self-control.

The last inspection identified that governors needed to be well trained and give more informed challenge and support to the school. This has been achieved. Members of the governing body know the school well and use their valuable skills and expertise to good effect to support the school. They undertake training regularly and they now ask challenging questions of leaders about a wide range of the school's work.

At the last inspection inspectors asked leaders to make sure all teaching reflects the best practice found in the school. Over time this has been achieved. Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher is new to her post and a number of new

teachers and teaching assistants have joined the school. Support for new staff is well planned and makes a positive difference to their teaching skills. Leaders are assisting new staff further to meet the needs of the most able pupils in some classes. In addition, you are making sure that further training is given to leaders and to the newly established staff team in the Reception class to further improve teaching of the youngest children.

Another recommendation at the previous inspection was for the school to develop the skills of middle leaders in checking the work of staff. Middle leaders are now particularly successful in coordinating reviews of their subject and identifying clearly how the school can improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Governors maintain careful oversight of the school's safeguarding work. The work of the school liaison officer brings much additional benefit in providing early help to families. The school plays a full part in referring concerns and linking with other professionals to review pupil and family needs. Because leaders make sure staff are well trained and up to date, staff are knowledgeable about issues that affect children, such as neglect and sexual exploitation. Staff know how to record and refer any concerns they may have about the welfare of pupils or adults. Messages about safe behaviour are covered well through regular information on the school website for pupils and their parents. Because of good information and regular learning at school about internet use, pupils have a clear awareness of how to stay safe while online.

Inspection findings

- The school remains good because the previous successes of leadership, teaching and achievement have been sustained while many new staff members have joined the team. For example, developing pupils' ability to be emotionally settled and ready to learn continues to be a key strength of the school.
- Through clear and well-considered leadership the school has overhauled the teaching and assessment of subjects. Tracking of pupils' learning has been much improved and learning for pupils remains rich and varied.
- Reviews of the work of the school by leaders are honest and thorough. You recognise that, while pupils' attainment is improving rapidly, more attention is needed to make sure teaching is always adapted well to the needs of different pupils. This is particularly so for the most able pupils in some classes.
- Your plans for improvement are detailed yet realistic and reflect the high ambitions you hold for the school. For example, in the Reception class, you have made sure there has been a rapid improvement in the children's attainment over the past three years. Nevertheless, for the youngest children to achieve even more highly, you recognise that further training is needed for staff and leaders about teaching Reception.

- You expect high standards of behaviour from staff, pupils and families. The positive example you set ranges from the warm way you greet pupils, parents and staff, to the way you notice the achievements of individuals and provide frequent encouragement.
- You have made sure Castle Hill St Philip's is a welcoming and friendly school. There is a very keen emphasis upon providing support to families so that they feel confident to link well with staff. Extra help and assistance is provided wherever needed. Many parents commented that the individual support they receive is valued highly.
- Pupils' widely differing needs are regarded thoughtfully by staff and by other pupils. Leaders and governors place a great emphasis upon the school being one that promotes respect. Thus, staff plan their work carefully to adapt to the needs of disadvantaged pupils to help them overcome any likely barriers to their progress. Pupils learn that they each have talents and abilities that will be given an opportunity to flourish. Disadvantaged pupils are increasingly taking up the additional learning activities that the school offers all pupils.
- The school's careful use of pupil premium funding to supplement staffing is giving disadvantaged pupils much extra help in their learning. Well-planned support is enabling disadvantaged pupils to make faster progress. This is evident within the Reception class as well as for older year groups.
- Over time, published information and school information shows that from low starting points disadvantaged pupils are making good and sometimes outstanding progress. The gap in attainment between these pupils and other pupils nationally is diminishing.
- Significant improvements in the achievements of disadvantaged pupils are evident in mathematics and in English. Intensive support for disadvantaged pupils' reading skills is bringing great benefit, particularly in key stage 1. The standard of writing by all pupils, including by the most able disadvantaged pupils, has risen quickly since the previous inspection. This is because of high-quality staff training, as well as successful leadership from you and from the subject coordinator.
- During the inspection, there were many examples where the support given to specific individual pupils is enabling them to persist through many difficulties in their lives and to succeed. A typical parental comment was: 'The school works tirelessly to support our child ... it is an absolute credit to the school that our child is thriving academically, socially and above all emotionally.'
- Pupils make large strides forward in their personal development, behaviour and welfare, so they are prepared well for secondary school. Throughout the school, staff teach pupils skilfully to understand values such as perseverance. Thus pupils know what such behaviours mean; they identify them accurately in their own behaviour and that of their peers.
- Clear and positive arrangements are in place to make sure pupils develop increased self-awareness and self-control. Pupils really want to help their school to improve. Pupils contribute to school life well, for example

through membership of the school council and varied roles such as collecting and returning the class register, organising recycling and composting any waste food.

- Displays throughout the school celebrate positively any notable achievements pupils make. For example, in key stage 1 there is a positive display of the names and photographs of pupils who are 'learner of the week'. Friendly competition between classes is also promoted well, for example in identifying which class has the highest attendance.
- Within classrooms throughout the school, pupils' behaviour is very positive. They listen well to staff and to one another; they cooperate well in groups and take care with their work.
- Pupils move sensibly between classrooms and are punctual because they are keen to learn. During the inspection, I overheard older pupils making a required visit to a classroom unsupervised. They thought they were unobserved but this did not matter – they acted responsibly and safely. This matches school evidence that many pupils are developing into self-assured, thoughtful individuals.
- There are some pupils for whom managing their own feelings and behaviour is more difficult. Staff and leaders are giving these pupils increasingly successful attention and the behaviour of these pupils is improving well.
- Staff are very supportive of the work of school leaders. It is not uncommon for staff to say that you are approachable and affirming. They say you only introduce ways of working that you firmly believe in. As one member of staff said, there is high-quality support and a culture of learning which means 'you never worry about making a mistake'. Your approach inspires much confidence among staff. Teachers new to the profession are particularly appreciative of the genuine, individualised support they receive from you and other leaders.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attainment rises further by making sure all teaching is matched well to the needs of pupils, particularly the most able
- staff and leaders develop a deep understanding of how to provide the very best learning and teaching for Reception class children.

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 Wigan. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Based upon the initial information available to me, the following key lines of enquiry were developed for the inspection:

- What impact is the school having in helping disadvantaged pupils to catch up with other children?
- Are leaders correct that pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare is a strength of the school?
- Are staff who are new to school or new to their roles being supported well by leaders?

As in the short inspections of other schools, I also made it a key line of enquiry to consider whether safeguarding is effective.

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss your views of the school and your work to sustain current strengths and improve further. You and I observed teaching, learning and behaviour across classrooms and outdoors. We looked at samples of pupils' work and school information about pupils' progress. I spoke to pupils in classrooms and corridors. I held a meeting with a random sample of 14 pupils from Reception to Year 6. I reviewed responses from pupils to an Ofsted questionnaire. I listened to some children read. I talked to some parents as they brought their children to school. I reviewed 51 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. I reviewed information from a school survey of parents in 2015, as well as evidence gathered during a 2016 survey currently underway. I spoke to some staff about their work and reviewed staff responses to an Ofsted questionnaire. I met with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. You and I checked school records of the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers. We checked the school admissions register and a sample of class registers. I reviewed examples of school records about the care and protection of pupils.