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Frances Holland  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Holland

### **Short inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

There have been staff changes and difficulties with recruitment since the last inspection. However, you and your senior leaders have shared the leadership of literacy to ensure that reading remains a school priority. Your new inclusion manager has built on existing systems to better support pupils who have a range of learning needs. The context of the school has altered too. New arrivals often have additional learning needs, and consequently the number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the school has risen. You are being creative in seeking help from parents and governors to support these pupils so that they benefit from additional support in their learning. Governors report that they can see a real difference in the progress of pupils receiving this help.

You are accurate in your evaluation of current school priorities. Your strategic recovery plan provides all leaders, including governors, with clear actions for improvement. Governors report that their school visits provide them with a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the chair's strategic committee meetings allow them to assess and challenge the progress being made against current priorities.

Parents are extremely positive about the school. Many note the commitment of the staff as a strength. As one parent commented, 'you are fully dedicated to the school

and children, which really shines'. Pupils and staff echo this parent's view. All staff who responded to Ofsted's survey say they are proud to work at St Stephen's. Pupils describe St Stephen's as an 'encouraging' school.

In the school's previous inspection report, it was recommended that leaders raise the proportion of pupils making outstanding progress in writing and mathematics. You have established clear and effective tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress and have maintained a focus on this, despite difficulties with staff recruitment. The real-life application of mathematics has been addressed through increased problem-solving opportunities. You continue to refine mathematics teaching and learning and are currently focusing on reasoning.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The designated safeguarding leader has ensured that all staff, including those who join the school mid-year, understand the school's safeguarding policy and new legislation. Staff referrals indicate that they are well informed about safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead acts swiftly to address concerns, as seen in her detailed records. She works effectively with a range of external agencies, including the local authority, to ensure that pupils are helped to keep safe.

Pupils reported that they feel safe in school because 'adults are there to help' and they 'will always act to help'. They appreciate the school's 'let's talk' approach and report that their worries are always dealt with quickly. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the internet because they learn about it in assemblies. They report that staff deal swiftly with any poor behaviour but they understand that they also have a responsibility to be good role models. A high proportion of parents, and all staff who responded to the survey, agree that children are safe at St Stephen's School.

### **Inspection findings**

- Firstly, I considered what leaders are doing to accelerate progress for all pupils at key stage 2, so that they meet the national standards. This is because Year 6 pupils in 2016 did not meet the expected standard in reading and mathematics. We also looked at disadvantaged pupils, as they did not meet the expected standard because middle-attaining pupils did not make enough progress.
- You have identified that pupils do not always fully understand what they are reading and this prevented them from meeting the expected standard in 2016. You have focused on providing more opportunities for them to develop their comprehension skills and broaden their vocabulary. The daily reading time is working well. Teachers use this time effectively to work with pupils to challenge their understanding. During the inspection, pupils explained to me how they look out for new vocabulary in these sessions and share it with the class. Pupils struggling with their reading are closely monitored and are also supported by parent and governor volunteers in these sessions. You acknowledge that you need to continue to build on and refine the reading time to maximise pupils' progress. Year 6 pupils who read to me, including disadvantaged pupils, have

good comprehension skills and are making good progress in their reading.

- You have introduced a reading comprehension intervention strategy to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who have been identified as making slow progress. This is having a positive impact on their progress. For example, 15 pupils have made the equivalent of a year's progress in the last six months. Current assessment shows that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making good progress, and a higher proportion are already working at the expected standard than at the end of 2016.
- The mathematics leader has identified a need to develop pupils' reasoning in mathematics so that more pupils meet the expected standard at key stage 2. In visits to lessons, and in pupils' books, we saw pupils being given the opportunity to explain their reasoning before approaching problem-solving activities. Pupils all agree that they are challenged to think in their mathematics lessons. Work in books and current assessment information supports good progress. Current data also indicates that the majority of year groups at key stage 2 are already working in line with end of year national standards. There is little difference between the progress and standards of disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils.
- Work in key stage 2 pupils' writing books is of a high quality and demonstrates good progress. There is evidence of increasing skills in grammar, spelling and punctuation over time – an area for improvement in the last inspection. The school's focus on vocabulary is clear, for example in the vivid descriptions of a mythical creature in Year 4, described by one child as having a 'slithery silhouette'. Pupils are involved in evaluating their own writing. They can explain what they need to do to improve. During the inspection, one group explained that they need to include a range of prepositions in their work to make it more interesting for the reader.
- I then focused on the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring that pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils, continue to make gains in their phonics and reading at key stage 1. Disadvantaged pupils did not meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2016. Half of this group had special educational needs and/or disabilities and, consequently, this was reflected in the results.
- Phonics and reading are well taught, as seen in visits to lessons and when listening to pupils read. You acknowledge that at times, in whole-class lessons, those who have additional learning needs could make even more progress. You have provided effective training to support teachers in meeting the learning needs of all their pupils, and this is an ongoing school focus. Key stage 1 pupils are making good progress in both reading and phonics, and apply their phonic knowledge well to their reading and writing. Current assessment information for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, shows that the high standards achieved in reading in the early years are being maintained.
- Finally, we looked at the attendance and persistent absence of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For the last two years, pupils from this group have had either lower attendance or greater persistent absence than the national figures.
- The inclusion manager works effectively with a range of agencies to support parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This

helps them to attend school more regularly. As a result, current attendance for this group of pupils has risen and is close to the national figure for all pupils nationally in 2016. The number of pupils with persistent absence has also been reduced, by half, since last year. The impact of the improved attendance on pupils' learning is clear in the recent reading assessments. Pupils spoken to also reported that when they are absent from school they are helped to catch up on lost learning.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- build on the current reading strategies to accelerate progress through targeted teaching of comprehension skills across all year groups
- embed current intervention and whole-class strategies to support pupils with low starting points, including those who have additional learning needs, so that they make substantial progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Ridding  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection:

- I discussed the work of the school with you and the deputy headteacher at the start of the inspection and throughout the day
- I considered the responses from staff and pupils and those in Parent View, the Ofsted online survey
- I met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and the extent to which they feel safe in school
- I met with a group of governors
- I met the inclusion manager and senior administrative officer to discuss aspects of safeguarding and attendance
- I visited lessons and looked at pupils' work with you and your deputy headteacher

- I listened to pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 6
- I met with the mathematics and literacy leaders
- I considered documentation provided by the school and information posted on the school's website.