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25 July 2017

Ms Jan Sorohan
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Sorohan

Short inspection of St Paul's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have successfully addressed areas for improvement by building a team of leaders who effectively support staff to improve their skills. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning and they know how to improve their work. Pupils have become adept at finding things out for themselves and managing their own learning because of the excellent direction they have received from staff. You have also developed highly effective middle leaders who manage their subjects well. The result is a highly motivated staff who have embraced the challenges of the new curriculum with positivity and vigour.

Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Staff are welcoming and warm in their approach to pupils. My visits to classes showed enthusiastic learners who were ready to discuss their work and could reflect well on what they do.

The ambitious vision that governors have set for the school ensures that pupils are energised by an engaging and diverse curriculum. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that the school's Christian values help pupils to become well-rounded individuals, and this is exemplified in pupils' thoughtful conduct. There is an aspirational culture among staff. Pupils appreciate the learning opportunities that they receive. One member of staff sums this up well, stating, 'St Paul's is a unique school in every positive sense of the word. Children are happy, secure, cared for and challenged. It is a place loved by pupils, parents, staff and the community.'

This is school with many strengths where attainment is rising, most significantly in mathematics and reading. However, we agreed that there is still work to be done to improve the rate of progress and the attainment of pupils, particularly in key stage 1. This formed a key line of enquiry for this inspection. We also agreed to look at how leaders in the early years promote boys' writing and how middle leaders design the curriculum to promote the development of pupils' skills in history and geography.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose: records are detailed and of high quality. You have established a vigilant culture within the school. Staff appreciate the training and updates they receive on safeguarding matters. They feel well informed about issues affecting pupils within the school.

Pupils feel safe in school and parents agree. Pupils feel that they can approach any member of staff with any concerns that they have. They have a clear awareness of dangers and how to manage these in their everyday lives, including when online. Pupils lead assemblies as digital leaders to reinforce these messages.

Pupils have a strong voice in the school. They have opportunities to talk through their frequent 'one voice' sessions, where pupils from all year groups come together in different classes to talk with teachers. Pupils appreciate the way in which staff respond to any concerns. The frequent opportunities to offer their views contribute well to building pupils' confidence. This helps them to articulate their thoughts and provides positive reinforcement for their emotional well-being.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, we agreed to look at the progress pupils make in writing. The progress in pupils' books is good. The English leader is very effective in analysing the strengths and weaknesses of provision and has identified that there are persistent spelling errors in pupils' writing that have not been tackled effectively in key stage 1. She has also recognised the need for pupils to experience more opportunities to write at length. The structured way in which tasks are presented to pupils inhibits their creativity. For example, where pupils are given three lines for their writing, they rarely extend sentences beyond the space provided. In contrast to this, the most effective pieces of writing in key stage 2 are characterised by their open structure, so that pupils have the opportunity to write creatively. As a result, pupils make better progress. These key priorities for raising standards have not been translated into the school's improvement plan, so governors are not receiving clear information on how leaders are improving writing further. Leaders' rigorous approach to developing writing has been successful in increasing the rates of progress for pupils in key stage 2. However, teachers' assessments do not accurately recognise the significant progress pupils make in their work.
- The second key line of enquiry that we agreed upon was to look at how leaders were promoting boys' writing in the early years. Children enter Nursery with skills below those typical of their age. Effective analysis by the early years leader has identified that boys' underdeveloped fine motor control is having a negative impact on their ability to

write. Due to effective intervention to improve boys' physical writing skills, outcomes have improved. By the end of their Reception Year, boys are catching up to leave Reception with broadly average standards. The progress for boys who join the school in Reception rather than Nursery is accelerated because leaders have a clear commitment to providing all children with the best possible start. Although there are opportunities for children to practise core skills of numeracy, reading and writing in the outdoor provision, adults do not provide the direction needed to promote boys' participation in these areas.

- Finally, we agreed to look at how effectively leaders have designed the curriculum to promote pupils' progress in history and geography. The curriculum leaders have ensured that planning is comprehensive. The skills-based approach allows pupils to achieve at different levels. Pupils have opportunities to extend their geography and history skills in a range of subjects. Pupils' history and geography books show clear evidence of skills progression and leaders have collected examples of pupils' achievements to set the standard of good practice for staff and pupils in the school. The work is challenging and there is excellent evidence of cross-curricular writing that allows pupils to display their understanding and knowledge of geography and history. An example of this is pupils' work in Year 6 on natural disasters that explains volcanic eruptions. Leaders have a very good awareness of their subjects and your school is progressing to lead the way in the design of a mastery curriculum in geography and history. However, leaders have identified scope for accelerating the improvements in teaching by giving staff further opportunities to observe and share the best practice in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- priorities for development are expressed clearly in improvement plans, so governors can evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the school
- pupils in key stage 1 have more opportunities to write at length and to demonstrate creativity in their writing
- teachers address common spelling errors in key stage 1, so that these do not persist in pupils' writing
- assessment procedures for writing are refined, so that they accurately inform teaching and learning
- leaders build on the existing strong practice in history and geography, so that staff can learn from the best practice that exists in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we visited classes together to observe pupils learning. I met with leaders and governors and spoke to the school improvement partner about safeguarding and aspects of school leadership and management. I spoke to pupils informally during lessons about their work and I heard pupils read their own work as part of their classroom activities. I reviewed safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I discussed a wide range of areas of school life with pupils, both formally and informally. I conducted a scrutiny of key stage 1 pupils' writing books and work in history and geography from across the school. I also met with the lead teachers for English, the early years, the curriculum, geography and history. I reviewed documentation, which included the design of the curriculum and its assessment arrangements, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, and the school improvement plan. I took into account 63 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as 16 responses to the pupil survey and 27 responses to the staff survey.