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Mr Simon Atkinson
Headteacher
St Stephen's CofE Primary School
91 Westbourne Park Road
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Dear Mr Atkinson

Short inspection of St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Your leadership has maintained pupils' good quality of education. Since taking up your post in September 2015, expectations have been raised. You have a clear and accurate understanding of the priorities for improvement, for example with writing. The capacity and strength of the senior leadership team have increased, and you are creating a culture of the highest expectations throughout the school.

Governors are pleased with your appointment. The local authority adviser also has confidence in your leadership, reporting that you quickly identified the priorities for the school, especially with regard to challenging and underperforming staff.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They share a common purpose to bring about change that will raise standards, especially through ensuring high-quality training and continuing professional development for all the staff at the school. They are strategic in their allocation of resources to support pupils, especially those who speak English as an additional language.

Strong foundations are being built in the early years foundation stage and in key stage 1. You recognise the need to ensure that the good practice being developed in these areas is shared with colleagues in key stage 2. Staff are therefore being deployed in a way that fulfils the school's aims and enables their expertise to be shared across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have implemented effective systems and policies to safeguard pupils. If there are safeguarding concerns, the reporting and referral procedures in place are understood and followed by staff precisely. Pupils say that they feel safe, and also know that they can talk to an adult if they have a concern or worry. Governors met with a group of pupils to satisfy themselves that this is the case. Pupils also said that, though rare, any instances of bullying are addressed and dealt with quickly by the adults in school.

Posters with the names and photographs of the safeguarding leads are highly visible around the school, including the chair of the governing body who also has responsibility for safeguarding. All appropriate checks on the suitability of staff to work in the school are conducted and correctly recorded on the school's single central record. Thorough and regular training of staff reflects the current statutory guidance from the Secretary of State.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, the number of key stage 1 pupils who were writing at greater depth was significantly lower than the national figure. You identified the need to make improvements in both attainment and progress in writing, a priority that governors have fully recognised and supported. The provisional key stage 1 data for 2017 indicates that writing has improved, significantly with respect to pupils writing at greater depth. We agreed that we would make writing our first line of enquiry, to confirm the effect of your strategies.
- You and the governors identified a need for increased capacity within the staff to raise standards in English, and particularly in writing. The subsequent appointment of an assistant headteacher with responsibility for leading English has started to accelerate the pace of these improvements. You ensured that they would be properly supported by using an external adviser.
- The assistant headteacher was able to provide further evidence to demonstrate the improvements that had been made in writing, but has also recognised that standards need to continue improving.
- We visited key stage 1 lessons together; writing that we looked at in pupils' books supported the improvements in this year's results. During observations of learning, we saw in practice the modelling strategy that you say has led to improvement. It was also clear that the teachers had high expectations of their pupils' progress.

- You have recognised that remaining inconsistency of practice across the school is a reason why the school remains good, rather than outstanding. This is highlighted by the assessment information that you hold for the current Year 5 pupils. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the school average for this year group. The previous inspection report identified that fewer pupils in this group were achieving outcomes at the higher levels. For these reasons, we looked at the school's work to support these pupils as our second key line of enquiry.
- Our visit to key stage 2 classes, including Year 5, demonstrated the good support that pupils who speak English as an additional language are now receiving, particularly in reading and writing. Inspection of the monitoring files kept by teaching assistants showed how effective individual and group support has been provided for these pupils. Written work in books, verbal responses in lessons and the conversations during inspection showed the effectiveness of your work to improve outcomes for key stage 2 pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The subject leader for English has reviewed the teaching of phonics across the school. The specific interventions for the youngest pupils who speak English as an additional language are supporting them to acquire and develop their language skills.
- Though attendance of all pupils is broadly in line with national figures, the attendance of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is well below national figures. This is why we chose attendance as the third key line of enquiry.
- You told me that the school's recently introduced monitoring and tracking systems are more robust than previously. Attendance has become a part of the annual review meetings for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have started to send personalised letters to the families of all pupils to recognise good or better attendance, while also addressing those families whose children need to attend school more regularly. Good or better attendance is promoted and celebrated in assemblies and weekly newsletters, and the pupils comment favourably on these.
- The current school data indicates that the attendance for pupils who have an education, health and care plan shows a marked improvement on the 2016 figures, and none of the pupils from this group is demonstrating high persistent absence, a further improvement from the previous year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff continue the good work to improve writing throughout the school, so that standards are consistently high, particularly throughout key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Simber
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you regarding the schools' self-evaluation and the agreed key lines of enquiry. We also met, along with the school's senior administrator, to discuss safeguarding and attendance procedures, and the accuracy and completeness of the single central record of the pre-employment checks on staff. I met with members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a local authority adviser. You and I conducted a learning walk of the school, looking at pupils' work and observing the support they received from the staff at the school. I met with the English lead to discuss the actions undertaken to raise standards in reading and writing. I met with a group of pupils to find out their views about the school. I considered the responses of parents to the online Parent View questionnaire, as well as the responses from staff and pupils.