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Mr Greg Edwards
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Edwards

Short inspection of The Priory Parish CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You ensure that The Priory Parish CofE Primary School is a caring school underpinned by a strong Christian ethos. The overwhelming majority of pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils have a love of learning. They engage fully in their lessons and behave well. Pupils go the extra mile to support each other so that the diverse community in which they learn is harmonious, friendly and tolerant. This comes from you and your governors' philosophy that every child should succeed and realise their potential. Consequently, you and your deputy headteacher leave no stone unturned in your pursuit of excellence. Your commitment to breaking down barriers to learning is striking. The pupils live out the school's mission statement by learning, believing and achieving.

In the short time that you and your deputy headteacher have been in your roles, you have wasted no time in driving forward rapid improvements across the school. Your evaluation of the effectiveness of the school is sharp and accurate. The improvement plans are focused and realistic. As a result, it is clear that you, your leadership team and governors know exactly what actions to take to improve pupils' outcomes. A clear example of this improvement work is in key stage 1, where pupils' achievement has increased dramatically because of the strong leadership of teaching, learning and assessment.

Another area that has improved considerably is pupils' progress and attainment in writing. This year's provisional results indicate that pupils' overall progress in writing is extremely strong. This is because you have focused on ensuring that pupils' writing is developed right across the school, from the early years to key stage 2. Pupils are proud of their writing. Their handwriting skills are extremely well developed because there are plentiful opportunities to practise handwriting across the curriculum. Furthermore, pupils' writing is fluent and neat, as evidenced in their independent writing books. Pupils particularly embrace 'the big write' on Fridays. You acknowledge that pupils' progress and attainment in reading must match the excellent improvements seen in writing. That said, you have already begun to embrace this challenge. There is clear evidence of improved attainment in reading across the school.

Since the last inspection, you have overhauled the teaching of mathematics. Staff have received valuable training to improve teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics. Added to this, pupils' outcomes improved by the end of key stage 2, as indicated by the provisional national tests results for 2017. Pupils' progress in mathematics matches that found nationally. However, you understand that pupils can make more rapid progress, and attain more highly, with a stronger focus on reasoning and problem-solving skills. Your school improvement plan rightly focuses on this crucial area for improvement.

An area that has seen less improvement across the school is pupils' attendance. Although you have wide-ranging strategies to improve rates of attendance, you still need to gain the support of a minority of parents to ensure that their child attends school more regularly. This is because you recognise that pupils who are regularly absent from school sometimes do not make the progress of which they are capable. You acknowledge that this area must improve more rapidly, but the support of parents is essential in order to achieve this.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors receive regular training. They know and understand how to recognise the signs and symptoms of potential abuse. Leaders and the governing body regularly review site safety. They take appropriate action to improve security. Parents unreservedly say that their children are safe. Equally, pupils say that they feel safe. Pupils and parents receive regular training on how to stay safe online. This is a key strength of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Inspection findings

- Since your and your deputy headteacher's appointment, you have improved outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics considerably across the school. Your strong, decisive leadership has focused on ensuring that the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning leads to rapid improvements in pupils' outcomes. The provisional national test results for 2017, coupled with your own

internal information for other year groups, show that outcomes for girls improved across the vast majority of year groups. Disadvantaged pupils also make strong progress. You have introduced a wide range of effective strategies to raise achievement. You have capitalised on both the excellent outcomes in the early years and the excellent phonic teaching to improve outcomes across all subjects.

- Alongside improving outcomes for girls and disadvantaged pupils, you have also secured better progress and attainment for the most able pupils. This is because teachers plan effectively for the different abilities in their classes. It is also because you track pupils' progress methodically and you now expect teachers to use this information to inform the next stages of pupils' learning. In 2017, provisional key stage 2 outcomes show that when compared with the national average, a similar proportion of pupils achieved the highest standard in reading and writing. Provisional results show that just below the national average achieved the highest level in mathematics. You acknowledge that more training for staff in teaching pupils problem-solving and reasoning skills is what will make the most difference to pupils' outcomes.
- In 2016, the progress made by pupils in key stage 1 was weak. Leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching and assessment have had a profound effect on improvements to this provision. In 2017, by the end of key stage 1, a high proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. This marked improvement can also be seen in the work produced by current key stage 1 pupils.
- An area of intense focus has been ensuring that teachers' assessments are reliable. You have introduced strong, robust assurance systems. Your deputy headteacher is also a moderator in the local area for other schools. Leaders' outward-facing approach to school improvement has resulted in frameworks for assessment being devised by your staff and shared across the local authority. Teachers' accurate assessment and your intense moderation of pupils' work have played a vital part in improving outcomes across the school.
- Although you employ a range of strategies to improve pupils' attendance, this has been less successful than other actions to improve provision and outcomes. Rates of attendance improved in 2017. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has also declined. However, there is much more work to do to encourage some parents to ensure that their children attend school so that they can learn successfully.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve further pupils' overall rates of attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school, especially girls
- maintain the sharp focus on improving the overall standards in reading across the school
- further enhance pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics so that more pupils excel.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Smart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and a selection of leaders and teachers from across the school. I met parents and three members of the governing body. I spoke formally with a group of pupils and informally with others around the school and in lessons. Furthermore, I observed teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2 and visited the early years, including the nursery. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance information, pupils' assessment information, a range of policies, your evaluation of how well the school is performing and your school improvement plan. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection I considered six responses to Ofsted's free-text service. There were no responses to the staff questionnaire. Six responses were received to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.