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Miss Veronica Maher
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Maher

Short inspection of St Philomena's Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. St Philomena's converted to become an academy school on 1 October 2014. When its predecessor school, St Philomena's Roman Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team, working together with you, has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The recent appointment of an additional deputy headteacher has strengthened leadership further. You demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. For example, working with the senior leadership team, you have developed teaching in the early years provision so that more children than nationally reached average standards by the end of the Reception Year.

The governing body is well informed, knowledgeable about the school and able to highlight areas for improvement. Governors are committed to supporting leaders in providing high-quality training and professional development for all staff. This commitment is improving the quality of teaching.

You and the senior leadership team have analysed the provisional 2017 key stage 1 and 2 outcomes. You have identified the strengths and the areas in which improvement is required. You have prioritised the actions needed in order to secure the improvements that leaders have identified.

You ensure that there is a caring and supportive ethos that runs through all aspects of the school. This was evident from the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff. Parents typically appreciate that pupils at the school are polite and friendly. Pupils said that they are proud to go to the school. They behave well in class and

conduct themselves sensibly around the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff understand and follow the school's procedures so that any concerns that may arise are reported and followed up swiftly. Pupils said that they feel safe and are happy at school. They talked knowledgeably about how the school helps to keep them safe. For example, pupils understand the school's system for identifying visitors. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare. Activities, including those organised during anti-bullying week, help them to deal with any problems that occur. Pupils told me that staff are available to help them and listen to them should they have any worries or concerns.

Leaders make sure that staff and governors attend regular safeguarding training. This training helps to ensure that all staff and members of the governing body play a full part in keeping pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that the first line of enquiry for the inspection would focus on leaders' actions to improve pupils' progress in writing and mathematics. This was because the 2017 provisional assessments suggest that pupils' progress, although positive, was weaker by the end of Year 6 in 2017 than in 2016.
- You and senior leaders have analysed the provisional results and put in place appropriate actions to improve the quality of teaching. This included planning appropriate interventions for pupils identified as needing further support.
- You have identified the need for pupils to practise writing, particularly writing longer texts using neat, fluent handwriting. You have allocated more lesson time to enable pupils to write routinely and practise these key skills. You have also put in place new initiatives to help improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. You have raised expectations of pupils' use of correct spellings and punctuation in their writing. Work in pupils' books shows that this is starting to improve the quality of pupils' writing, but is not fully embedded.
- Leaders identified the need to improve pupils' reasoning skills and develop 'mastery' in mathematics. One of your strategies is the whole-school focus on the way that multiplication skills are taught. Our visits to lessons showed that teaching is improving pupils' confidence in using their mathematical skills to solve challenging problems.
- We agreed that the second key line of enquiry should focus on the actions that leaders are taking to raise attainment in key stage 1.
- Leaders have made improvements to the teaching of phonics in Years 1 and 2, and are using new initiatives to improve pupils' outcomes in reading. The 'booster' classes and one-to-one support for selected pupils are helping them to improve their reading skills.
- In the classes we visited, pupils were using mathematics equipment confidently

to help their learning. Teaching assistants provide effective support and challenge for pupils in developing their skills.

- We also examined the school's systems for securing regular attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attendance rates are above average overall. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was below that of their peers in 2016.
- Leaders promote and acknowledge good attendance through assemblies and awards. Monitoring systems are robust. The school works in effective partnership with the parents of pupils whose attendance causes concern. Staff follow up repeated absence by making home visits. The school's 'no letting up' policy is working successfully. Attendance information for 2017 shows that there has been strong improvement in the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Teachers routinely have the highest expectations of pupils' writing, by ensuring that recently introduced initiatives are fully implemented.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Simber
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the senior leadership team to discuss the school's self-evaluation and to agree the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the single central record of employment checks. I held meetings with senior leaders and the governing body to discuss the school's work. I visited lessons with you and looked at pupils' work. I also met with a group of pupils to hear their views about the school. I considered the responses of parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as those to the staff and pupil surveys.