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Mr David Simpson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Simpson

### **Short inspection of The Epiphany School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 January 2018, 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 2014.

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

Leaders and governors have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You provide strong leadership for the school. You have successfully steered the school through a period of major staffing change in recent years. You have successfully restructured the leadership team and ensured that the rich curriculum has been maintained throughout this period. You are well respected by staff and pupils. You lead by example, setting high expectations and being prepared to model good practice in subject leadership when necessary. As a result, middle leaders and teachers are held to account robustly for the progress of pupils but at the same time, they feel supported and valued.

Pupils are articulate and friendly. They enjoy school and have good relationships with each other and their teachers. Arts and sport are particular strengths of the school. Many examples of pupils' high-quality artwork are on display around the school. Members of the school football team are very proud that they are currently the county champions. Pupils express themselves confidently through music. They sing with gusto during assemblies.

You have successfully addressed the issues raised at the previous inspection. Teachers work collaboratively to plan activities for pupils that are appropriately challenging, particularly in writing. Teachers are adept at changing their plans according to pupils' response to learning activities. Consequently, pupils'

misconceptions are picked up early and addressed.

Pupils' progress in 2016 was not as strong as it had been in previous years and was below the national average in several areas. However, in 2017, pupils' progress improved significantly in all areas except mathematics. You are acutely aware of this and, with senior leaders, you have successfully taken action to raise current pupils' achievement in mathematics. Pupils' progress in reading has improved in the last two years but you are ambitious to see further improvement, especially for boys. You have introduced several initiatives to achieve this, with some signs of success. The school has a high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Several of these pupils have education, health and care plans. You have ensured that, although there have been many changes in staffing, the provision for these pupils has been enhanced in the last year.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your senior colleagues have developed a strong culture of keeping pupils safe from harm. Appropriate checks are made on all staff to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. All staff have been trained in safeguarding and so they understand exactly what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders are very aware of the potential for some groups of pupils to go missing from education. They are rigorous in following up each and every case when this may be a risk. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils, parents and carers report that the school is a very safe place. Evidence seen during the inspection strongly supports this view. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and know that if they have concerns they can talk to any member of staff. Pupils are knowledgeable about internet safety. Parents speak highly of the help, support and guidance that you and your staff provide. They are confident that their children are kept safe at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Senior leaders make good use of contact with other schools in the local area to share ideas and moderate judgements about pupils' achievement. Middle leaders are increasingly expected to report about progress in their areas of responsibility. This ensures that senior leaders' self-evaluation of the performance of the school is accurate and leads to action plans that are fit for purpose.
- To decide if the school remained good, one of the key lines of enquiry centred on key stage 2 pupils' progress in mathematics. Key stage 2 pupils did not make enough progress from their starting points in 2016 or 2017. Senior leaders have introduced changes to teachers' planning in mathematics. Teachers are now using a different assessment system in mathematics. As this system has become more established, teachers are now able to pinpoint pupils' misconceptions and plan learning activities to deal with them. Senior leaders have provided training

for staff about teaching problem-solving in mathematics and encouraging pupils' use of reasoning. Pupils are now being given more opportunities to grapple with mathematical problems. However, some pupils are still not confident enough in using different methods to solve problems and explaining the thinking behind their approach.

- Another key line of enquiry concerned the efforts of the school to develop pupils' reading skills. Senior leaders are aware that, although pupils' progress in reading improved significantly between 2016 and 2017, there is more work to be done to encourage all pupils, and especially boys, to read more often and from an early age. In September 2017, senior leaders invited parents to act as helpers in school. A small number of parents were subsequently trained to deliver a programme of extra help in reading for particular key stage 1 pupils. Early indications are that this is having a positive effect on pupils' reading skills. However, the programme has not yet finished and so has not been evaluated fully. Teachers communicate regularly with parents and encourage pupils to read at home. Pupils' reading records show that many parents have responded positively and are actively engaged with helping their children read at home.
- A third key line of enquiry considered the effectiveness of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The school is a highly inclusive environment. The special educational needs coordinator is passionate about this area of work and highly skilled. She communicates effectively with teachers and teaching assistants and so ensures consistent teaching and high expectations for these pupils. The leadership restructure included the appointment of a manager with responsibility for pupils with education, health and care plans. Consequently, the provision for these pupils is well managed and effective.
- The majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points as a result of the support they are receiving. Teachers and teaching assistants are given specific training which is based on pupils', often complex, conditions. However, some staff still lack the depth of expertise required to meet fully pupils' needs.
- Pupils behave well during lessons and around the school site. They are keen to contribute their ideas in class and they are polite and well mannered when they do. Teachers have developed a culture where everyone feels included and this ensures that pupils are motivated and involved. Pupils accept each other readily. Parents are supportive of the school and its staff. One parent's comment was typical of many who responded to the Parent View questionnaire, 'Both my daughters go in smiling and come out smiling. I couldn't recommend this school highly enough.'

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers further develop key stage 2 pupils' ability to solve problems in mathematics
- middle leaders evaluate fully the impact of recent initiatives to improve pupils'

reading skills

- teachers have more opportunities to develop further their understanding of the particular barriers faced by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I held a telephone conversation with a school adviser who has worked with you in recent years. I held a meeting with pupils from the school council and spoke with many other pupils informally at break and lunchtime. I made observations of learning across the school jointly with senior leaders. I looked at several examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, documents relating to safeguarding, records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to behaviour and attendance. I took account of responses to questionnaires from 130 pupils and 18 staff. I also considered 171 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and one phone call from a parent.