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Mr Paul Edwards  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Edwards

### **Short inspection of St Philip's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your commitment has driven forward improvements since your appointment in January 2017. Supported by your new deputy, you have created a culture of high expectations in a calm and focused learning environment. Staff and governors share your aspiration to ensure that pupils live up to the school motto, having opportunities 'to be the best that they can be'.

The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been effectively resolved. The quality of teaching at the school has improved. Staff appreciate the opportunities they have to share their knowledge with colleagues within the supportive culture you have created. Leaders have ensured that staff have the skills that they need to accurately analyse information to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. As a result, learning activities closely match the needs of the pupils and provide appropriate levels of challenge. Pupils who spoke to me said that they like the challenges that they are given in mathematics to test their skills and make them think, especially when solving problems. Where pupils are struggling, particularly in reading, the precise gaps in their learning are identified, and they are given the help that they need to catch up quickly. You have accurately identified that teachers need to accelerate the progress that pupils make in phonics so that a higher proportion reach the standard expected for their age by the end of Year 1.

The changes you made to the way that reading is taught were a key focus during the inspection. The school's own assessment information shows that an increasing

proportion of pupils have skills and knowledge typical for their age. However, only a small proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth. It is too soon to see the impact of the changes you have made on the outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2.

Pupils are very proud of their school and they take pride in their work too. They know what they need to do to improve their work, and are proud of their achievements, particularly in writing. Pupils who spoke to me said that teachers make learning fun, especially in science in which they have been carrying out experiments about evaporation. The respect they have for each other, and the positive relationships fostered within the school, contribute to the good progress that pupils make. As members of a number of committees, they feel valued and listened to. Pupils have been instrumental in bringing about improvements to the outdoor areas, and have played an active part in local environmental events. Pupils who spoke to me said, 'We are planting trees for our future.' They appreciate the opportunities that they have to take part in a range of clubs and sporting events, and to play chess with students from the local university. The breakfast club is very well attended and contributes to the calm start to the day for an increasing proportion of pupils.

The vast majority of parents and carers spoken to are very positive about the school. They appreciate the welcome you give them each morning and the care and support their children receive from staff. Parents of pupils with health concerns, and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, speak very highly of the help given to them and their children. Parents feel that communication is improving and that they are made to feel welcome in the school. You have identified the need to build on the positive improvements in parental engagement, especially to ensure that parents have the skills to help their children at home, particularly with their reading.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's safeguarding policy and procedures meet requirements, including online filtering and monitoring arrangements. Systems for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are diligently applied. Up-to-date training for staff ensures that roles and responsibilities are understood and followed correctly. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet and social media. Pupils told me they feel very safe and well cared for in school. They feel confident that adults will listen to them and appreciate the opportunity to talk, particularly during 'Worry Wednesday' lunchtime sessions. They said that bullying is rare and behaviour is good most of the time. They are confident that any inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with very quickly and in an appropriate manner.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, we looked at a number of key lines of enquiry. The first was in relation to reading. You accurately identified the reasons behind the dip in

both progress and attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. As a result, you have improved the way that reading is taught across the school. You have ensured that teachers have the correct skills and knowledge to use assessment information accurately to build effectively on what pupils already know. As a result, learning activities accurately match the needs and interests of the pupils. Pupils have opportunities to extend their vocabulary through well-crafted challenges. Staff skilfully use questions that develop pupils' ideas, and refine their skills. Teachers identify pupils who are struggling and ensure that they have the help that they need to catch up quickly, particularly pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, most pupils have the skills and knowledge in reading that are typical for their age in key stage 1.

- Leaders and staff have developed a culture that promotes the excitement and anticipation that comes with reading a book. Pupils enjoy their class novels and are eager to listen to the teacher read the next chapter at the end of each day. Writing activities are carefully designed and skilfully linked to a range of texts or stories. A pupil who spoke to me said, 'It gives us ideas for our writing and we learn how to use new words.' Books in classrooms are thoughtfully chosen to meet pupils' interests. Reading books are carefully selected to match pupils' abilities and provide appropriate challenge. You acknowledge that you need to embed the changes you have made to ensure that higher proportions of pupils are working both at the standard expected for their age, and at a greater depth, particularly in key stage 2.
- Next, we discussed the need to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils reach the standard expected in phonics by the end of Year 1. Leaders quickly resolved concerns about the quality of teaching. The phonics leader has ensured that staff have the skills that they need to teach phonics accurately and consistently from Reception onwards. Staff share expertise, and good subject knowledge contributes to the progress that pupils make. Leaders regularly analyse information to identify any pupils who are struggling. They act swiftly to ensure that pupils receive help to catch up quickly, particularly pupils who speak English as an additional language. Workshops for parents explain how phonics is taught in school and provide advice on how parents can help their children at home. Reading resources accurately match pupils' phonetic skills. Pupils use their phonetic knowledge confidently in their reading and writing. The school's assessment information shows that an increasing proportion of pupils have the skills in phonics typical for their age. Despite these improvements, you have accurately identified the need to accelerate pupils' progress in phonics to ensure that a higher proportion reach the expected national standard by the end of Year 1.
- We also discussed the below-average proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. Not all the children who join the Reception class attend the school's Nursery. Helpfully, leaders have established close links with the other local nursery settings that children attend. The majority of children join the Reception class with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. Teachers quickly identify the key barriers to children's learning and what their next steps will be. Parents commented that children settle quickly into the nurturing environment as a result of well-established routines. Staff have a

good understanding of how young children learn and, as a consequence, they provide carefully crafted activities that capture the children's interests and meet their needs effectively. The development of children's communication skills is a key priority. Phonics is taught as soon as children start in Reception, and staff provide a range of opportunities for children to practise and refine their writing skills. Staff use questions effectively to enhance children's independent learning activities. They skilfully expand children's vocabulary and encourage them to refine their ideas. 'Stay and work' sessions at the start of each day allow parents the opportunity to see what their children are learning. Staff encourage parents to contribute to the information they gather about the progress children are making. The positive relationships modelled and promoted by staff contribute to children's positive attitudes towards learning. As a result, children make good progress, and the proportion who are ready for Year 1 is improving. You have identified the need to build on the improving parental engagement in Reception and ensure that parents have the skills and confidence to help their children make good progress.

- Finally, we looked at attendance. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who speak English as an additional language, continues to improve and is now almost in line with attendance nationally. You have been relentless in your drive to improve the attendance of a number of pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, attendance for these pupils is also improving. You know your families very well, particularly the most vulnerable, and work with a number of agencies to ensure that parents have the support that they need to help their children. You have introduced a range of imaginative incentives to highlight the importance of attending school regularly, including trophies, certificates and end-of-year treats. Parents commented on the well-attended breakfast club, which allows them to bring their children to school each day and then go to work knowing that they are well looked after. Attendance overall is above the national average, which has a positive impact on improving the progress that pupils make.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers accelerate the progress that pupils make in phonics so that they catch up quickly, and reach the standard expected for their age by the end of Year 1
- they embed the changes made to the teaching of reading, so that a higher proportion of pupils work at the standard expected, and at greater depth, by the end of key stage 2
- they build on successful strategies to improve parental engagement and ensure that parents have the confidence and the skills to help their children at home, particularly with their reading.

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

Amanda Stringer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I also met with the chair of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. I conducted a learning walk with you, and we visited classrooms where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I met formally with a group of pupils and spoke with parents at the start of the school day. There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, to be taken into account and no free-text comments were received. I scrutinised pupils' assessment information, the school's self-evaluation document and your school improvement plan. I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child-protection procedures and practices.