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Mrs Paula Bliss
Headteacher
Newdigate Church of England Endowed Aided Infant School
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Dear Mrs Bliss

Short inspection of Newdigate Church of England Endowed Aided Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since you started as headteacher in 2015, one of your priorities has been to develop a leadership structure that is sustainable and appropriate for the size of school. You have strengthened the leadership roles at the school. This has enabled you to carry out your additional role of part-time executive headteacher of another local school. This role takes you away from Newdigate one day a week. School leaders at Newdigate provide effective leadership during this time. All staff who responded to the staff survey, issued during the inspection, agreed that they feel proud to be a member of staff at the school. Staff are encouraged to take responsibility for their work, develop their expertise and exercise their professionalism. They feel trusted and supported by leaders. Nearly all staff who responded to the staff survey stated that leaders support their professional development and promote improvement.

The school's Christian ethos instils a respect for values such as forgiveness and trust in pupils. Staff have high expectations of behaviour. As a result, pupils are well mannered and considerate of each other. Parents and carers are warmly welcomed and encouraged to become involved in the life of the school. Tellingly, all parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View online survey agreed that their child was happy and felt safe at school. One parent commented, 'The staff are clearly

passionate about every aspect of children's learning and development.' Another parent said, 'I am so happy with everything here, the children are safe and secure and encouraged to thrive!'

Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. In classrooms, there is a calm atmosphere of productivity and engagement. Pupils are very keen to talk about their learning and clearly enjoy their time at school. Pupils' high-quality artwork is celebrated around the school building in colourful and exciting displays. As a result of good teaching, most pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

You have forged a constructive relationship with governors, who support you in your work. They are closely involved with the school because they are highly committed and passionate about their role. They understand the importance of transparency, approachability and close working with parents. They appreciate the importance of planning strategically with you and the diocese to benefit all pupils at the school.

The previous inspection report recommended that the school should accelerate pupils' progress in writing so that it consistently matches the levels in reading and mathematics. It recommended that this was achieved by ensuring that pupils know they are expected to use and practise the writing skills they have learned in their literacy lessons across other subjects. You have successfully addressed these recommendations. Your assessment information shows that progress in writing is in line with that in reading and mathematics, although girls outperform boys in both reading and writing. Evidence in pupils' books shows strong progress in writing and that pupils are using their writing skills consistently across other curriculum areas.

Children in the early years foundation stage make good progress from their starting points and outcomes for these children have been consistently above the national average since 2015. The proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2017 was well above the national average. The outcomes of the Year 1 phonics screening check were below the national average in 2017, as they have been over the past five years. You are addressing this by introducing a new method to teach phonics across the school. Staff are now developing the confidence to deliver phonics at a consistently good standard.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are appropriate, up to date and kept securely. Staff receive regular updates about safeguarding from leaders. This means that staff are well informed and know about the school's processes for keeping pupils safe. Systems to ensure that all adults receive the training that they need are efficient and managed well. Governors regularly check the effectiveness of the school's work to keep pupils safe.

Staff know the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child. You record information chronologically and indicate staff involvement and action taken to resolve issues. This enables you to monitor situations closely.

Pupils say that they feel safe. For example, they know what bullying is and say that this is very rare in the school. If it happens, pupils, staff and parents agree that it is resolved. Pupils who spoke with me reported that they feel safe in school because, 'We have adults who will help you.' Pupils can explain how to keep safe in different situations, for example when working online.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, including your experienced English subject leader, have worked together to raise standards in phonics across the school. As a direct result of introducing a new method of teaching phonics at the beginning of the academic year, your assessment information shows that pupils are making good progress. Leaders have attended training on this new approach and have delivered training for staff who teach phonics. Pupils, including those who did not pass the phonics screening test last year, use their phonic knowledge well to decode unfamiliar, and more complex words. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of delivery in some phonics lessons. This results in some pupils being less engaged with their learning. You recognise that further training is required to bring all staff up to a consistently high standard of teaching.
- The proportion of boys achieving the expected standards in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 has been lower than girls for the past two years. Leaders have addressed this by redesigning the curriculum to provide more opportunities to engage boys in literacy. For example, the current school topic is centred on eggs. Boys and girls were excited to tell me about the dinosaur egg found in school, as well as their scientific understanding of the life cycle of a chicken. This excitement has a direct impact on the quality and content of boys' and girls' writing and pupils were keen to share their work with me. You enhance your curriculum through outdoor learning, for instance 'Welly Wednesdays' and Forest School provision. Leaders have invested in 'boy-friendly' texts to encourage boys who are reluctant readers. The impact of these measures is clear in the progress that boys and girls, including those in the Reception Class, are making in their reading and writing. You recognise the importance of maintaining this focus to ensure that progress, particularly of boys, continues to improve.
- In 2016, overall attendance dipped below the national average for primary schools. Attendance in 2017 improved to above the national average, but it was still low for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for some disadvantaged pupils. The close links and positive relationships that school staff, including the leadership team and the home school link worker, have with families has resulted in improved attendance of these groups of pupils this year.
- Governors regularly monitor the impact of the small amount of additional funding; this includes pupil premium and sport premium. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils. Sports funding provides pupils with a broader range of sporting activities. You provide termly

reports and leaders are challenged to ensure that additional funding is being used effectively. Governors understand their statutory responsibility to report up-to-date information about this spending on the school's website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a higher proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check
- boys' progress continues to improve in reading and writing, so that the difference in outcomes between boys and girls diminishes.

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

Yours sincerely

Marcia Goodwin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your leadership team, the English subject leader, members of the governing body and a representative of the diocese. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with many other pupils informally and during lessons. We observed learning across the school and looked at examples of pupils' work. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance. I took account of responses to questionnaires from 32 pupils and 17 staff, and 33 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including free-text comments.