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3 July 2018

Mrs Mary Rome  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Rome

### **Short inspection of Philip Southcote School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Ross Macdonald, 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 October 2013.

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

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

You lead the school with clear determination and passion to see pupils engage in learning and make good progress from their starting points. You are supported ably by your senior leaders, who share your vision and drive for the pupils at the school. Teachers and support staff follow your expectation that all pupils should achieve their best. The vast majority of staff who responded to the staff survey said that they are proud to work at the school and enjoy working there. As a result of your firm commitment, pupils are supported well and thrive at Philip Southcote School.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. They say that staff support them well by setting work that is tailored to their needs. One pupil remarked, 'Lessons are really good because the teachers know what helps each person.' Pupils get to lessons quickly and are ready to learn from the outset. The routines and values you have put in place are respected by all, resulting in exemplary behaviour throughout the school. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. They feel it is well led, with one parent saying:

'The headteacher has created a very nice atmosphere in the school. All the teachers and herself are very approachable and if children have any problems, they can go straight to her.'

Leaders and governors have successfully addressed the areas identified for

improvement at the previous inspection. A new school-wide approach to monitoring progress has been introduced. Leaders and staff use this system effectively, helping them to develop a firm grip on the progress of current pupils. In addition, a highly developed focus on reading permeates the curriculum, allowing pupils to access a wide range of learning experiences. The work in pupils' books demonstrates that they make good progress over time. Teaching is typically highly effective. However, occasionally, it is not as strong in some classes as it is in others.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. The single central record details accurately the robust employment checks that leaders carry out on staff and other adults in the school. Adults are trained appropriately in all areas of child protection and know what actions to take to keep pupils safe from harm.

The school works effectively with other agencies to make sure that pupils are safe. Staff maintain useful relationships with a range of other professionals to support highly vulnerable pupils.

You and your staff show a strong commitment to pupils' well-being. Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They know who to speak to if they are worried.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, we evaluated leaders' actions to improve attendance. We also evaluated how effectively leaders monitor and evaluate lessons to ensure that all pupil groups make strong progress in relation to their starting points. We further evaluated how well the governing body holds leaders to account for the current and future success of the school.
- Leaders' effective action has led to a rise in attendance. Key staff challenge absence and expectations are high. Effective monitoring routines are now in place, with a high increase in direct contact with parents. On the occasions that pupils do not attend school, staff work determinedly to find out why and to establish where they are. Pupils respond well to this high level of care and many are attending more regularly. However, you acknowledge that there is more work to be done so that attendance rates continue to improve.
- A rigorous system for monitoring pupils' progress is now in place. This is starting to cascade through all areas of the curriculum and is driving the planning to increase challenge in lessons. However, there are still areas where teachers' assessments are not accurate enough to enable pupils to make the most progress.
- You have designed a curriculum that uses reading as a vehicle for progress. Changing the school day to include a bespoke reading session that includes the entire school community has transformed attitudes. For example, in an art lesson, inspectors observed pupils asking to stand and read to the class about

artists that they had been researching. They read with enjoyment and confidence and with the full support of their audience.

- You have a passionate and committed governing body that brings a wide range of skills from outside of education to the strategic leadership of the school. This wider knowledge and expertise have enabled you to build on accountability at all levels, resulting in standards being driven upwards.
- Members of the governing body are rigorous in their pursuit of high standards, challenging leaders during scheduled meetings and visiting regularly to check the validity of leaders' reports. Like school leaders, governors have a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They appreciate the work of staff and are keen to support you with the school's next steps.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' assessments of pupils' achievement are consistent across all subject areas
- attendance continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Gary Tostevin  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We observed teaching and learning and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in all areas of the school. Most observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.

We held meetings with you, senior leaders and support staff, as well as meeting the chair of the governing body accompanied by two governors. A telephone call was held with a representative of the local authority. We scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of school performance, minutes from governors' meetings, school policies, safeguarding records, records of attendance and behaviour, information about pupils' progress and the school website.

We spoke to pupils during the school day. We also took into account 25 responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.