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Mrs Olivia DeMoraes
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Dear Mrs Olivia DeMoraes

Short inspection of St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Thames Ditton

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You, together with your senior and middle leaders, have shaped a school in which pupils are happy and keen to learn. There is a strong culture of nurturing, mutual respect and support, as well as high expectations. An ethos of collective endeavour permeates the school, with staff and pupils clearly enjoying their work. Leaders, including governors, have a clear vision for the school, which promotes the development of the whole child within a caring community based on Christian values. There is a strong commitment to use detailed knowledge of each pupil to help them develop and achieve well. Staff feel proud to work at St Paul's Catholic Primary School.

Pupils learn in a calm, orderly environment. The school is well maintained, and wonderful displays enrich pupils' learning. During our visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful, with pupils working diligently and cooperating well. Pupils told me how much they enjoy school. Responses to Ofsted's online parent and staff questionnaires are highly positive. A very large majority of parents would recommend the school, and appreciate the teaching and support their children receive. Many parents commented on how delighted they are with the school and how happy their children are. One parent spoke for many when they said, 'The school has a great community spirit.' However, a few parents expressed concerns, including about leaders' communication with them, and said that some matters have previously been unresolved.

The school has recently been through a change in leadership. The headteacher at the time of the last inspection retired at the end of March 2018. You stepped up from your deputy headteacher role to lead the school as acting headteacher. The process of recruiting a substantive headteacher is underway.

Children get off to a strong start in the Reception Year. Over the last three years, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been well above the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check remains well above national levels. After a small dip in 2016, last year outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 were above national averages. Also in 2017, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected and higher standards at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were well above national levels. However, the progress made by pupils from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average for each subject.

Leaders set out to improve the rate of pupils' progress throughout all year groups in the school. Targets for pupils' performance, and teachers' accountabilities, have been strengthened across the school. Regular meetings between leaders and teachers take place to review pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and performance data. Leaders are determined to help prepare pupils well for their next steps, as well as to achieve high academic standards. Where pupils are not progressing as rapidly as leaders think they should, teachers and leaders take steps to help them catch up or raise their standard of work further.

Leaders rightly acknowledge that in 2016 pupils' achievement in writing was not as strong as their achievement in reading and mathematics. Leaders accurately identified the teaching changes required to secure rapid improvement. Teachers raised expectations of pupils' independent writing, and, in 2017, pupils' outcomes in writing improved at the end of both key stages 1 and 2.

A year ago, leaders decided to change the way mathematics was taught. The subject leader introduced a new approach, designed to provide greater challenge and promote deeper thinking. Leaders' monitoring shows that these changes to the way pupils learn mathematics are showing signs of success, but there is more to do.

A review of some pupils' work showed how the actions taken by leaders to improve the quality of teaching have had a positive impact. For example, pupils' books showed an increase in problem-solving in mathematics, and higher standards of writing by most pupils. Detailed and helpful feedback to pupils by teachers, in line with the school's policy, is offered across all years. High expectations are evident in pupils' work in both English and mathematics. However, the standard of work in pupils' books from other subjects is generally lower, particularly in key stage 2. Leaders have already identified that tracking and improving pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is a priority for improvement. Bright displays of artwork in corridors, specialist teaching of music and languages, a recent

focus on information technology and the significant improvement in the quality of physical education indicate the breadth of the curriculum. However, assessing pupils' progression through a range of subjects needs further development.

You have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. These were to raise the quality of teaching and strengthen partnerships with parents. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely and provide effective training and bespoke support to ensure that the overall quality of teaching remains high. Leaders also introduced a programme of activities to improve engagement with parents, which has been welcomed.

The skilled governors, with wide expertise, are aware of the level of care shown for individual pupils, and the steps taken to support those who are in danger of falling behind or who could do even better. Governors are rightly proud of the improvements in standards that have taken place at the school. However, school leaders have not conducted a sufficiently robust self-evaluation to identify current strengths and weaknesses. Consequently the judgements on which you base the school's improvement plan, including setting targets and milestones for the achievement of groups in the school, lack rigour. This inhibits leaders' and governors' ability to evaluate fully the impact of actions taken to improve pupils' attainment and progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed. You are committed to ensuring that pupils are safe at all times and that a culture of safeguarding is evident throughout the school. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training, check how well staff remember the details, and provide follow-up training where necessary. Staff know pupils well and they are alert to any concerns, which they follow up swiftly. Leaders ensure that they seek the right advice from other agencies when needed, and show tenacity in following up concerns with the local authority.

Parents, staff and pupils are united in their view that pupils are safe in school. There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including learning about online safety. Pupils are confident that any instances of bullying will be followed up rapidly and effectively by staff.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; leaders' responses to the recommendations made in the previous inspection report; actions taken by leaders to improve pupils' progress through key stage 2; and how well the wider curriculum promotes pupils' achievements.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning. They know what is expected of their learning and behaviour. They gain confidence in a caring environment with high expectations and, as a result, are well prepared academically and socially for

their next steps in education.

- There is a great deal of high-quality teaching within the school. Teachers regularly assess the progress pupils are making, and increasingly plan tasks that are well matched to pupils' starting points. During activities, teachers check pupils' depth of understanding, appropriately readjusting activities if required.
- A review of pupils' work with leaders showed that teachers are now providing more stretch and challenge in both mathematics and writing. This is enabling current pupils to achieve even higher standards. Teachers' feedback meets leaders' expectations, urging pupils to think more deeply about their work and to take responsibility for improving it themselves, with teachers' support. Most pupils respond by correcting work and also by explaining their thinking, when asked to do so.
- The standard of work across subjects other than English and mathematics is more variable. Leaders do not carefully assess pupils' progress in subjects across the curriculum.
- Leaders have taken successful steps to improve the partnership with parents. The very high response to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, indicates the commitment of the parent community towards the school. While the great majority are highly positive about the school, a few parents feel that the school has not yet successfully dealt with their concerns.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2
- teaching provides greater challenge for pupils across the curriculum
- leaders make stronger links between accurate self-evaluation and improvement planning.

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

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your assistant headteachers, and three governors, including the chair and vice-chair. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. Together, we visited classes across all year groups in the school. I reviewed samples of pupils' work across key stages 1 and 2 with you, your assistant headteachers, the early years phase leader and the subject leader of physical education. I considered 41 responses by staff to Ofsted's online survey. I took careful account of 321 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 189 free-text comments and two emails. I also had conversations with parents picking up their children at the end of the school day. I spoke with pupils during playtime and reviewed 120 responses by pupils to Ofsted's online survey. I looked at documents, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; information about pupils' learning and progress; minutes of meetings; and records regarding safeguarding.