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Mr M Hargreaves
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Primary School, West Derby
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Dear Mr Hargreaves

Short inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, West Derby

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 2016, 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. School leaders have created a strong ethos where the school's Christian values underpin all aspects of its practice. This has created a harmonious environment in which children are happy, safe and secure. There is a growing sense of partnership among the staff because of the vision that you have set for the school.

You have addressed many challenges since the last inspection, including tackling some of the weakest teaching. The result is a renewed sense of purpose and a school that looks towards the future. You and the staff engage well with other schools through the West Derby school partnership and the local authority. The impact of these partnerships can clearly be seen, particularly in the improved provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The previous inspection highlighted the warm environment, the mature behaviour of pupils and the excellent relationships within the school. These features continue to be strengths. Pupils are articulate, bright and willing to learn and, more importantly, they are happy. They are respectful of each other's views and work well in groups to achieve good outcomes. This was demonstrated in a Year 5 lesson where pupils worked together to improve the language used in the instructions they were writing on how to put up a tent. The support that pupils provided each other resulted in a

highly effective learning environment where they reviewed their own work and supported each other in focused discussions.

Since the previous inspection, you have taken effective action to address the achievement of pupils in mathematics, which is evidenced in the most recent key stage 2 results. Pupils' mathematics skills were also evident in their science books, particularly in key stage 2. Pupils provide written feedback for each other.

We agreed that the progress of the most able pupils could be better. In most lessons they receive the same introduction and do the same work as other pupils, meaning that they find the work too easy and are not stretched to reach the standards of which they are capable, particularly in writing. Some parents share this view too. We also discussed the need for the school's improvement plans to be more specific and to include clear, measurable outcomes so that the effectiveness of leaders' actions can be clearly evaluated. Governors provide you with effective support and challenge but have not checked that their statutory duties are met with regard to the publication of information on the school website and in the promotion of the equality duty

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an atmosphere of care and support in the school. Pupils feel safe. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, strongly agreed with this view. Pupils are clear that they can approach any member of staff with problems or concerns and that these concerns will be quickly addressed.

The leadership of safeguarding is a strength of the school. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe online. Consequently, they are responsible and mature in their attitudes towards internet use. Records relating to safeguarding highlight the school's determination to keep pupils safe. Staff are vigilant and are clear about the procedures that are in place to keep children safe. They have a good awareness of a range of issues around child protection and radicalisation. Training and discussions about safeguarding are regular. This means that all staff are aware of any problems and changes in legislation.

Inspection findings

- You, senior leaders and governors are committed to improving the school further. Staff are on board with the direction that you have set for the school.
- The school's development plan correctly identifies the main areas for improvement such as the need to challenge the most able pupils, particularly in writing. However, these plans are not always clear and targets set lack precision in identifying what progress pupils should make in their learning, for example. This means that it is difficult for leaders and governors to check the impact of actions taken.
- The majority of pupils meet the new expected standards in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. There is still some variation in the

achievement of pupils between year groups and in the achievement of the most able pupils. Too few pupils at present exceed these standards. Work in pupils' books is of a good standard and the topics they study show a good depth of understanding. For example, pupils completed good-quality work in science – classifying seeds and leaves and investigating different types of rocks. In many of the books seen, presentation is good.

- Provisional results published in 2016 showed that the attainment of girls in mathematics at key stage 1 was low compared with the national average. It was also low in science at key stage 2. The attainment of boys in these subjects, however, was much higher. The work in pupils' books and the way that boys and girls are treated in class reveal that there are no issues of inequality. Questions in lessons, for example, are addressed equally to boys and girls, while there was evidence of equal treatment in sporting activities.
- Activities such as the Year 5 pupils learning the song, 'All I want for Christmas is you' in sign language promote a good understanding of others' needs and pupils are very reflective and accepting of others' differences. Pupils live out the school's values of tolerance and respect. As we discussed, though, governors do not ensure that their leaders and policies consider how the school can actively promote equality of protected characteristics, for example. Whereas pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain, we agreed that a strong focus on promoting equality would enhance this further.
- Since the previous inspection, the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved, in part because the post holder responsible for this area of work has ensured that there are individual programmes to support pupils. These programmes are making a difference. I observed, for example, how adults skilfully modelled language, with notable effect on pupils' progress. However, the effectiveness of this support is not fully evaluated by school leaders in terms of the progress pupils make from their starting points.
- The school has a small number of children who are looked after and provision for these pupils is similarly personalised. In one session, pupils were supported to understand others' feelings. The adult leading the learning used the film 'Finding Nemo' to help pupils understand how they should respond in these situations. One parent commented that their child 'has always been met with understanding, care and attention and a willingness to find ways to [deal with] any issues'.
- The newly appointed pupil premium champion is a highly effective class teacher. He shares your leadership team's ambition for pupils' achievement. At present, however, the most able disadvantaged pupils are not receiving the challenge that they require to exceed the expected standards for their age.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website for the curriculum, the publication of the school's most recent key stage 2 results, the evaluation of the pupil premium, the evaluation of the sports premium, the annual special educational needs information report, the accessibility plan for pupils who have disabilities,

information about governance and charging and remissions.

- The school's work to promote equalities requires some refinement to cover all the protected characteristics defined in The Equality Act (2010).

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's assessments of pupils focus on the progress pupils make, particularly that of the most able pupils
- the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are stretched in their learning to achieve a high standard, particularly in writing
- the school's improvement plans are more specific and highlight clear measurable outcomes so that the effectiveness of actions can be clearly evaluated
- all statutory duties are met regarding the publishing of information on the school website and in the promotion of the equality duty.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with your deputy headteacher, the senior leadership team, the pupil premium champion and three members of staff. I met with two members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I considered the responses from 103 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I visited most classrooms, jointly with a senior leader, to observe and speak with pupils about their learning. I also scrutinised pupils' writing, mathematics and science books from a number of classes. I considered a wide range of documentation and information relating to your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, equalities, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and safeguarding.

Several lines of enquiry were pursued during the inspection. These included whether the most able pupils were making enough progress in writing and whether there was sufficient challenge for this group of pupils; the difference in attainment

of boys and girls in mathematics and science and whether there were any inequalities in the way they are treated or taught; the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils.