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Mr Richard Walthall
Headteacher
Stansfield Hall Church of England/Free Church Primary School
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Dear Mr Walthall

Short inspection of Stansfield Hall Church of England/Free Church Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2017, 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 June 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, your leadership team and the governing body ensure that Stansfield Hall Church of England/Free Church Primary School is a caring community underpinned by Christian values. Your mission is that you will help every child to develop as a unique individual. You ensure that the school is at the heart of the community and you commit to providing a valuable wrap-around service for pupils and parents. This includes a free breakfast club from very early in the morning and a plethora of clubs after school that many pupils attend. Your relationship with parents, pupils and the local community is impressive. Parents are unequivocally positive about the work both you and your deputy headteacher do to improve the school. Indeed, several parents say that they are overwhelmed by the support you give to them. They have full confidence in you because their children are happy, safe, make good progress and most importantly, they love going to school.

Parents also say that you and your staff's commitment to diversity is equally noteworthy. One such example is your commitment to promoting equality through your work to raise awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils' rights. In recognition of your work, most recently the school was accredited with the Stonewall Schools Champion Award.

Without doubt your work to promote British values is strong. Your pupils have a sound understanding of different religions in our society and they are adamant about the importance of being open-minded. Pupils can talk about democracy with ease because they understand why it is important. They also make links to the work of historical figures, for example the suffragettes who worked to ensure that women had the vote. Your pupils also understand why our society has laws. In school they do not readily accept poor behaviour because they believe it is not acceptable. They say that bullying rarely occurs. As a result, pupils work well together and it is clear that tolerance and respect are at the heart of the school.

Since the last inspection you have not only developed the school's work on equality and diversity but you have taken difficult decisions to improve the quality of education provided by the school. You recognised, for example, that children's learning in the early years was not as secure as it should be. You have now overhauled the provision and recruited new staff, who are able to provide the high-quality learning experience that your children deserve. It is now clear to see that children in the early years make good progress. Their achievement is assessed more regularly and accurately and this information is used to ensure that each child's progress is mapped. One such example was during a karate lesson, where the teacher assessed children's physical development. The overhaul in provision means that children now fully engage in their learning and the teaching of phonics, for example, is much stronger. As a result of the changes you have rightly made, a much higher proportion of children are expected to reach a good level of development this year.

Improvement in provision is not limited to the early years. You have developed the school's curriculum further to embrace project-based learning. This allows pupils to develop a wider range of skills in subjects other than mathematics, reading and writing. The projects that pupils undertake are exciting. They love the science fair; this enables parents and pupils to learn together. Coupled with the development of a wider, more relevant curriculum, you have rightly focused on ensuring that teachers' planning supports the learning of the most able pupils. This is particularly evident in key stage 1. All pupils, including the most able, are now able to talk proficiently about metaphors, similes and alliteration. The examples that they used were both imaginative and mature and pupils made good progress.

Leadership has also strengthened since the previous inspection. You and your deputy headteacher have both been released from teaching so that you can support new staff and ensure that systems for monitoring and evaluating how good teaching and learning are have become even sharper and more robust. The governing body has also been reconstituted and provides strong challenge and support to you and your leadership team. The governing body is acutely aware of the actions they need to take to improve the school further.

During the inspection you acknowledged the most important next steps for the school. First, we discussed the need to build on the rapid improvements in provision seen in the early years, so that more children achieve a good level of development. Second, we agreed that pupils' writing skills need to continue to improve. We

discussed that through project work pupils should have more opportunities to develop high-quality writing. You acknowledge that leaders should also ensure that pupils' spelling continues to improve when they work independently of the teacher. Third, we talked about strategies to strengthen further the standards that pupils achieve in mathematics by enabling pupils to use their prior learning to solve unfamiliar mathematical problems.

Safeguarding is effective.

Systems to ensure the safeguarding of pupils are robust. You and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records and referrals are timely, detailed and followed through effectively. Staff training is regular and the governing body has a proactive, experienced safeguarding lead. As a result of your work, pupils say they feel safe in school and parents are very positive about the work you do to ensure there is a culture of safety. This is clearly evident in the positive and caring way that pupils interact with each other. You also ensure that both pupils and parents are given information and support to pupils' safety when using technologies. Online safety is woven through the curriculum.

Inspection findings

- You have taken effective action to improve provision in writing, although there is still more work to be done to ensure that the progress pupils make continues to improve. By the end of key stage 1, the same proportion of pupils as is found nationally now reach the expected standard in writing. This year, you expect that figure to rise further. To do this, you know that pupils need to develop independence in spelling. Pupils' handwriting has also improved significantly because routines are in place and all staff know the standard you expect. You recognise that project-based learning should improve pupils' writing skills even further. This is because you believe that your pupils need real-life situations to inspire them to develop more confidence and proficiency in writing. The actions you have rightly taken show strength and capacity in leadership.
- Outcomes in mathematics continue to improve. The teaching of mathematics observed during the inspection showed that pupils now make good progress. You have improved the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers plan for the range of abilities in their classes, including the most able pupils. There is still some work to do to ensure that pupils can approach unfamiliar mathematical problems with confidence and determination.
- The systems you have to track pupils' progress in reading, mathematics and writing are strong. They are used effectively by teachers and teaching assistants to plan for learning and progress. Pupils' books show that they are making good progress across a range of subjects.
- You provide a range of professional development for teachers and teaching assistants so that the quality of provision continues to improve. Recently, teaching assistants have undertaken training in the teaching and assessment of phonics. Pupils now make good progress in phonics and some pupils in Year 1 are already at the required standard. School assessment data and inspection

findings indicate that the overwhelming majority of pupils will achieve the expected standard in the national phonics screening check by the end of Year 1. Nevertheless, practically all of those pupils who do not achieve the expected standard at the end of Year 1 do so by the end of Year 2.

- Reading is a key strength. Pupils achieve well in reading and most make good progress. This is because they are given plentiful opportunities to read in school. This is supplemented at home. Pupils use intonation and expression well to convey meaning. Pupils work out the meanings of unfamiliar words by using clues from the sentence or paragraph in which they occur. Pupils read a range of books, including fiction and non-fiction. It is clear to see why standards in reading are good by the end of key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- build upon the rapid improvements made to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years so that more children achieve a good level of development
- improve further pupils' writing skills, by:
 - enhancing pupils' ability to write at greater length in a wider range of contexts
 - ensuring that pupils' spelling continues to improve when they work without support from an adult
- continue to improve the standard that pupils achieve in mathematics by strengthening pupils' ability to solve unfamiliar problems.

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 Rochdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Smart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, your teachers, parents of pupils from the school, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Also, I met formally with a group of pupils

from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons. I listened to pupils read. In addition, I jointly observed teaching and learning in key stage 1, key stage 2 and the early years. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, minutes of the governing body meetings, the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school's improvement priorities, attendance information, a range of policies and the school's curricular information. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered 19 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text and two responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.