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Mrs Adele Gaunt  
Headteacher  
St Hilda's Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Gaunt

### **Short inspection of St Hilda's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 15 February 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 February 2013.

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

You, the senior leaders and the governing body ensure that St Hilda's is a caring, family community strongly underpinned by Christian values. You know your pupils well, which supports your mission to ensure that every pupil develops as a unique individual. You have expertly guided the school through a substantial period of change and growth. St Hilda's is a different school since the last inspection, with considerable changes in staffing and the marked increase in pupil numbers. You have not allowed these changes to weaken the many strengths of the school or to deter you from tackling the shortcomings identified at the previous inspection.

Parents are unequivocally positive about and proud of the work of the school. As one parent said: 'My child loves being at St Hilda's and thrives here.' Parents have full confidence in you because they appreciate your 'open door' policy and they know their children are happy and safe.

You work hard and successfully to ensure that your school provides a calm, inclusive and friendly ethos. The high standard of the school refurbishment promotes a sense of pride in the pupils and staff. The use of the playground makes the most of a small area to ensure that the pupils are happy, active and engage in a range of outdoor activities. The library bus is an inspirational way of promoting pupils' desire to read.

Governors are passionate about the school. Despite undergoing considerable change in recent years, the governing body has the skills and expertise to add value to the leadership of the school. Governors are well placed to offer appropriate support and challenge to you and your leadership team.

The work you have done to improve pupils' writing across the school is evident in the current progress data for pupils and in their work seen during the inspection. However, the full impact of these changes is yet to be seen because not all teachers are consistently following the agreed policy for teaching writing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is effective. The single central record is comprehensive and meets current guidance. Vulnerable pupils are monitored closely. Swift and effective action is taken to ensure that they are kept safe. All members of staff receive regular safeguarding training and are clear about school procedures to keep children safe. Staff are vigilant and sensitive to the signs of abuse and neglect. You work with a large and increasing number of vulnerable families and maintain meticulous records. You are not afraid to make strong representation to external agencies on behalf of pupils and their families when you feel even more could be done to improve pupils' safety and well-being.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when working online. They talk knowledgeably about the dangers as well as the benefits of technology. Pupils feel safe in your school.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I looked at: how well leaders challenge pupils to attain at expected and greater depth in writing; provision and progress of pupils across key stage 1 from their different starting points at the beginning of Year 1; how well leaders target disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2.
- A sizeable proportion of children arrive at school in the Reception Year with levels of development that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress over time and leave the school having reached standards that are above the national average in reading, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement at St Hilda's has been improving steadily each year. In 2016, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, made very strong progress in reading and mathematics to achieve above average standards. Nonetheless, all groups of pupils were less successful in writing last year. You were disappointed in these outcomes, which do not reflect the gains the school has made in tackling this area for improvement at the previous inspection. However, you have carefully analysed the reasons for these outcomes. My findings confirm that the high mobility of pupils and changes in staffing contributed significantly to the dip in standards in writing.

- You have taken effective action to improve provision in writing. You recognise that setting writing tasks in a purposeful context should improve pupils' writing skills. This was evident in an example of pupils' work, 'A letter from Cardinal Thomas Wolsey to King Henry VIII.' The 'linked learning' books provide a further opportunity for extended writing.
- Pupils' books show they often do not use their existing knowledge of phonics and dictionary skills to spell correctly nor do they apply their knowledge of punctuation and grammar to extended pieces of written work. The school improvement plan raises this as an area for development and you demonstrate strength and capacity in leadership to address this concern.
- You have identified that the transition from Reception class to Year 1 was proving challenging for some pupils. As a result, changes to how learning is organised and to the outdoor provision have been extended into Year 1.
- The systems you have to track pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics are strong. School data and other inspection evidence indicate positive outcomes as a result of the targeted support put in place for English. Pupils across key stage 1 are closely monitored to ensure that progress is maintained for the children who attain a good level development at the end of Reception class to the end of Year 2.
- Leaders have recognised that in writing disadvantaged pupils should be making accelerated progress and attaining the expected standard or attaining at greater depth, by the end of key stage 2. The school's monitoring and assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils are well supported. Teachers are very aware of the needs of disadvantaged pupils in their class. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is also true in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. However, along with other pupils in the school, disadvantaged pupils do not enjoy the same success in writing.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue to improve pupils' achievements in writing so that it matches the strengths in reading and mathematics by:

- ensuring that pupils apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills to extended pieces of writing
- all staff members follow the agreed policy for teaching writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Rennie  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, senior and subject leaders. Meetings were held with a representative from the local authority and four governors. Discussions were held with a group of eight pupils. I scrutinised pupils' work in their books and a range of documents provided by the school, including safeguarding information, policies and school's self-evaluation. In addition to this, I assessed the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central register (the school's record of safeguarding recruitment, checks on staff). I made short visits to see pupils learning in all classes except Year 4. I took account of 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 17 written comments. A letter from a parent and 21 staff questionnaires were also taken into consideration.