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Mr Paul Stephenson
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Dear Mr Stephenson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's CofE Primary School Moston

Following my visit to your school on 17 March 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in May 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- continue to focus on raising progress and attainment in mathematics by improving pupils' reasoning skills
- improve further the progress of the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils by ensuring that they have opportunities to extend their writing skills.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plan was evaluated. In lessons, I discussed pupils' work with them. I heard pupils read,

observed lessons with the headteacher, held a meeting with the writing and mathematics leaders and conducted a work scrutiny of a small sample of writing and mathematics books. I also scrutinised safeguarding procedures and records, discussed staff training and inspected the school's single central register of checks. I looked at the minutes of governors' work, and reviewed and discussed performance information for pupils presently in the school. I also reviewed performance management documents and reviewed monitoring records of teaching and learning.

Main findings

The leadership of the school has tackled many of the areas for improvement since the last inspection with vigour. You have effectively managed the weakest teaching in the school. The last inspection asked the school to improve the rate of pupils' progress, particularly that of boys in reading, writing and mathematics. The improvements to the progress of pupils' writing show that assessment in the school is accurate and a high standard is achieved by pupils in many year groups. Key stage 1 writing is proudly displayed in the hall and shows pupils working at a high standard. However, this has not been replicated in the progress and attainment of pupils in mathematics.

The new subject leader has taken the model of improvement for writing to implement changes to the way in which mathematics is taught in the school. She has ensured a clear focus on developing pupils' mathematical fluency and reasoning skills. In order to bring about rapid change, leaders have programmed a weekly cycle of development for teaching staff and these plans are starting to show in pupils' work. However, because the school has been slow to address the development of pupils' mathematical reasoning skills, there has not been enough time for these actions to significantly impact on the progress and outcomes for pupils.

The school's own progress data shows that boys are making progress that is similar to that of girls in the school and the scrutiny of pupils' work shows this to be an accurate assessment of their rates of progress. Moderation records also show this to be true. However, the work in the writing books of the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils is similar to that of other pupils. Consequently, these pupils do not progress as quickly as they otherwise could if they were provided with more-challenging work that stretched their thinking.

Due to the continuing development of staff, teaching assistants are being used effectively to support pupils' learning. They are increasingly using the technical language of both writing and mathematics and all staff have received training on questioning skills. This was evident in the observations that we undertook, where the most effective teaching posed open-ended questions to promote the depth of pupils' learning.

All pupils display positive attitudes to learning. I heard a range of pupils read, from

textbooks and from their own work. From a young age, they are developing fluency and expression. In many lessons, the texts they read were closely matched to the level of their ability.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They visit frequently and have a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are increasingly asking probing questions about pupils' outcomes in meetings and are keen to develop this further. School leaders provide clear and accurate information on the attainment of pupils and are adept at unpicking the reasons for any underperformance. However, these are not always recorded well in the school's own self-evaluation. Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the improvement of the school and are aware of the need to communicate this to the wider school community. Staff value the high-quality support that they receive from St Margaret Mary's RC Primary School. The strong partnership links between the two schools are assisting in the development of the curriculum at your school and are assisting in the development in teaching and learning.

External support

The school has drawn effectively on the support of the local authority and of St Margaret Mary's RC Primary School to make improvements to teaching and learning and in securing improvements in pupil progress or attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector