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Miss M Hindmarsh  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Hindmarsh

### **Short inspection of Kirkby CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 November 2012.

#### **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 staff and the governing body have embraced change and development over the last few years. You have extended and improved the early years environment so that now children learn in a stimulating and exciting series of spaces. The outdoor learning area is particularly effective, with opportunities for children to build, plant vegetables, explore the 'jungle' and enjoy a quiet reading zone. The impact of this is evident in the vastly improved proportion of children achieving a good level of development.

You have tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection well. Standards in mathematics are well above average. Pupils relish the challenge of problem-solving and investigating in mathematics and science lessons. Teachers deliver enjoyable lessons with flair and enthusiasm. You have reorganised the roles of subject leaders to take account of the challenges of the new national curriculum. There remains a small gap in the achievement of girls and boys, but it is narrowing each year. The walls in all areas of the school are a feast for the eyes with vibrant displays of pupils' work reflecting their numerous interests and research. Work on the food chain sits alongside displays of medieval helmets. Analysis of the digestive system is followed by wonderful artwork celebrating Mexico's festival of the Day of the Dead. Pupils' success in many different spheres is illustrated and celebrated. You have raised standards in reading across the school by a series of very effective

strategies put in place during your 'year of reading'. Pupils told me that they really enjoy books and appreciate the many books available in the libraries and the reading retreat shed.

Parents, pupils and staff, understandably, express very positive views about the school. Pupils told me that one of the best things is the ability 'to be yourself and follow your interests'. Behaviour around school is impeccable and pupils in all year groups show extremely positive attitudes to learning. They are interested, curious and willing to work hard. Pupils feel that they are consulted about many matters in school. Members of the school council have devised their own logo for 'Cofe the Caterpillar' who represents the qualities that they feel are most important. These are respect, caring, loving, friendship and forgiveness. Pupils are proud of their reputation for good manners and positive behaviour.

Parents had only positive comments about the school. They spoke warmly about the nurture their children receive in a school which is more like a large, happy family. They told me how well their children are prepared for secondary school. Staff spoke about their pride in the school and in their pupils and their absolute confidence in the quality of leadership and support they receive. Parents and staff spoke glowingly about the quality of leadership you show in your role as headteacher.

You have ensured that there is a good focus on meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils, beginning in the early years. Teachers look carefully at how well these children and the pupils are doing and identify what might be holding them back. Teachers plan thoroughly and specifically for them. As a result, in most subject areas they achieve well compared to all children and pupils nationally.

Equally, you provide strong support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that these pupils achieve as well as others in school.

You have ensured that pupils learn effectively in smaller groups. You organise classes into vertical groupings so that pupils can be set work according to their stage of learning for English and mathematics. This is having a good impact on raising standards and ensuring that pupils make strong and rapid progress.

The governing body is well organised and active. It has many ways to find out about what is happening in school and increasingly asks challenging questions.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, your staff and governors share a commitment to keeping pupils safe. Your arrangements for safeguarding are meticulous and highly effective. You work successfully with external agencies to minimise the possibility of harm to any pupils. Staff told me that they receive regular and high-quality safeguarding training to keep them well informed. They felt that they know how to act in a range of different circumstances. The staff told me that they do not consider what may appear to be a small concern to be unimportant. They are therefore always prepared to raise a concern quickly. You evaluate the risks involved carefully when

pupils take part in different activities. You are assiduous in ensuring that staff recruitment is conducted safely.

Pupils are confident that they are well looked after and can share any worries they might have with an adult. They describe their school as a happy and safe place. Pupils told me that they have no concerns about bullying. The school council is very active in ensuring that all children know what to do if they are worried about being bullied, but pupils say that it does not happen. I was impressed by the sign on one classroom door which simply said, 'We scare bullies'. Pupils told me confidently that they understood how to keep themselves safe in different situations. I was especially impressed by their awareness of the dangers to avoid when using the internet and social media.

Your learning mentors keep a very careful watch on attendance. They work with families to ensure that all pupils attend regularly. In the main, pupils enjoy school and want to be there. You make sure that any unexplained absence is followed up rigorously and that every child is accounted for. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing and for many of them it is because of illness and no other reason.

Leaders and governors ensure that arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality. Safeguarding meetings ensure that staff are constantly vigilant and alert to any concerns. You were able to show me the records of pupils who had benefited substantially from support provided by the school in different circumstances.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are well aware that standards in writing lag behind those in mathematics and reading. You have introduced many strategies to boost pupils' progress in writing. Pupils enjoy the two-week challenges in which they focus on a particular writing task or genre. For example, we saw a class of Year 3 and 4 pupils working with real enthusiasm on a poetry challenge. One of your most successful strategies is to teach pupils how to improve their own work and not to be satisfied until they have made it as good as it can be.
- Teachers ensure there is plenty of discussion before pupils start to write. Teachers set very high expectations that pupils will use technical language and develop a wider vocabulary. Your next focus, quite rightly, is to improve pupils' spelling. At present, too many pupils spell phonetically.
- Pupils enjoy having pieces of work displayed on the class writing walls. As each new piece is completed it is stapled over the previous one, so that over time, everyone can see the good progress that is made by all pupils. This strategy begins with early mark-making in the Nursery class. The success of your various approaches is seen in the very recent unvalidated results of this year's tests. Pupils in Year 6 have improved strongly in their spelling, grammar and punctuation work.
- Published data shows that in the past there has been a gap in the achievement

of boys compared to girls. However, we observed pupils in class and looked at many books and saw no substantial difference in their progress and achievement. Boys in the early years are now making very strong progress as a result of improved provision.

- We looked at how successfully the school is supporting the achievement of the most able pupils. I saw that teachers set very high expectations in all classes for pupils' attention, participation and engagement. Performance in mathematics is particularly strong. Even though standards are well above the national average, you are never complacent and are working to aim even higher. Pupils enjoy mathematics and relish the challenges set. We observed the excitement and enthusiasm of Year 6 pupils who were working on identifying patterns and solving problems. Pupils told me that they feel challenged in every subject, with one saying, 'If we find anything easy the teachers instantly make it harder.'
- Pupils are equally challenged in their work in English. I was impressed by Year 6 pupils writing sentences to show that they understood the nature of irony and how it is used by authors. As a result of the focus on ensuring that work is always challenging, more pupils than ever before have achieved greater depth in this year's tests.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school provides even more writing opportunities through a variety of subjects.

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 Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During my visit I met with you and your senior leaders and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a member of the local authority school improvement team. I met with a group of parents and looked at the survey results from the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I reviewed the staff comments on the Ofsted questionnaire as well as speaking to many members of staff. Together, you and I visited literacy and mathematics sessions in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. We looked closely at a sample of pupils' workbooks in English and

mathematics across the school. I met with a group of pupils from all year groups to hear their views and considered the pupils' responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire. I listened to four pupils of different ages and abilities reading and talked to them about their progress. I reviewed your current assessment system and data which tracks pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. I especially looked at the progress of boys overall, outcomes for pupils in writing and the level of challenge your teachers are providing for all pupils. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation and school development priorities. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements and your work to ensure the regular attendance of your pupils.