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Miss Joan Hassall  
Headteacher  
St Andrew's CofE Primary School  
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Dear Miss Hassall

### **Short inspection of St Andrew's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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 October 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 and your leadership team have created a caring and inclusive ethos that is embodied in the attitudes and behaviours of pupils at the school. Typical views that pupils articulated to the inspector included: 'We believe in peace and helping each other', 'We all believe in kindness and hope' and 'We include everyone and we treat them equally.' Your team has worked hard to ensure that the diverse community the school serves is united in its support for the school's work. One parent echoed the sentiments of many when she described how 'we feel as a family that we are a valued part of the wider school community'. Parents are particularly appreciative of the support and care that their children receive from staff at the school. They feel that their children are happy, well looked after and making good progress.

You and your leadership team have ensured that the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. You have skilfully managed the gradual expansion of the school. You have extended the leadership team and strengthened the group of middle leaders considerably, which has increased the pool of expertise and capacity to bring about improvement. The leadership culture is open and collegiate; members of staff greatly appreciate the support they receive and they value the consideration that leaders show for their well-being. As a result, the staff are highly motivated and keen to support pupils to be the best they can be.

You have further developed many established strengths of the school. The teaching of mathematics is highly effective for pupils of all abilities. As a result, pupils make consistently fast progress in mathematics throughout the school. Furthermore, the school's inclusive and harmonious ethos is being enhanced further by the 'ethos council' of elected pupils from Years 5 and 6. This is helping to ensure that pupils continue to behave in a considerate, responsible and mature manner. You have also continued to ensure that pupils benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities to enrich their experience of school. In particular, opportunities in music are broad and exciting, with pupils taking advantage of the chance to sing at the Royal Exchange Theatre and to play instruments alongside the Hallé Orchestra at the Bridgewater Hall.

You and your leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. You ensure that your plans for improvement focus on key areas that will lead to better outcomes for pupils. Despite this, plans do not always contain targets that are specific, measurable and ambitious. This has made it difficult for leaders and governors to check whether their actions are leading to significant and sustained improvements across the school.

Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. You and your leaders have sharpened your monitoring of teaching and learning. You showed me records of your monitoring that demonstrate a consistent focus on the impact of teaching on the progress made by different groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able. Similarly, you have improved the clarity of your systems for tracking the progress made by pupils. You carefully monitor the progress of different groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You routinely share this information with governors so they have a clear understanding of the progress being made by pupils. You have also created a vibrant environment for members of staff to share good practice and discuss what constitutes effective teaching. Members of staff value the opportunity to plan with their colleagues in parallel classes and the introduction of 'phase teams' has brought a new vitality to collaboration within the school. You have also developed effective working relationships with other local schools and are undertaking a broad range of work with these partners to develop different aspects of teaching, such as the development of pupils' writing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have established a culture in which all members of staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Members of staff demonstrate a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the safeguarding issues that are more likely to be prevalent in the local community. Your staff are knowledgeable about high-profile safeguarding issues that have occurred locally and they are alert to signs of abuse and neglect. Staff receive regular and relevant training on important matters of safeguarding such as keeping pupils safe from extremism and spotting potential signs of female genital mutilation.

You and other leaders have ensured that all safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. You closely monitor the well-being of pupils who are vulnerable. Leaders who are responsible for safeguarding have developed positive relationships with parents and external agencies, so that all can work together to make sure that children are kept safe and well cared for.

The school's work to equip pupils with the knowledge to keep themselves safe is a strength. For example, pupils spoke confidently about how to cross roads safely and showed a clear understanding of 'stranger danger', including when online. The school's work on e-safety is particularly thorough, and many parents attend workshops run by the school on aspects of e-safety such as staying safe when gaming online and when using social media.

The school completes all relevant checks on staff, supply teachers, governors and regular visitors to the school to make sure that they are suitable people to work with children. By the end of the inspection, leaders could demonstrate that all these checks were recorded on the school's single central record.

### **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to look at how effectively leaders have addressed the issue of high absence. The school's attendance figures for the last academic year indicate that leaders have had a significant impact on reducing rates of absence across the school. The school's overall attendance figure for the 2016/17 academic year was 1.2% higher than the previous year, and much closer to the national average. Even more impressively, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school halved during the last academic year and this figure is now closely in line with the national average.
- You have had a significant impact on improving the attendance of groups of pupils with weaker attendance. Boys and those eligible for free school meals are now attending school more regularly and fewer are disadvantaged by regular absence. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been transformed and the attendance of this group is now close to the national average for all pupils. These improvements are due to the implementation of a broad and rigorous plan. Your team has increased expectations around attendance with pupils and their parents. The benefits of good attendance have been relentlessly promoted and the use of regular rewards, such as attendance badges, has made the pupils keen to attend regularly.
- Despite these successes, you are keen to avoid complacency and you are aware that the focus must remain on further reducing rates of absence, particularly as overall absence is still above the national average.
- A second area of focus was how effectively writing is taught throughout the school. You and other leaders spoke with enthusiasm about a new approach to the teaching of writing that you have implemented in conjunction with other local

schools. We visited lessons and saw pupils engrossed in activities to develop their writing. Your leader of literacy explained a sound rationale for your new approach and how she is working with other staff to carefully evaluate the impact of new methods of teaching as they are being implemented. As this new approach is still in its infancy, the impact on the quality of pupils' writing is only just beginning to be felt.

- Pupils in Year 6 last year had made similar progress in their writing to the previous cohort, which was in line with the national average. It is evident from the data that the most able pupils are beginning to make faster progress as a result of improved teaching. Furthermore, younger pupils, and particularly those now in Year 2, have responded positively to the new methods of teaching and are making particularly fast progress. You are aware that improvements need to be consolidated and built upon to secure faster rates of progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with low prior attainment. As a result, you have rightly identified this area as a key priority in your plans to improve the school.
- Finally, I looked at the extent to which the most able pupils are supported to make rapid progress throughout the school. You described how you have made improvements in this area by making sure that teachers and teaching assistants have appropriately high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve. Your monitoring of teaching has rightly focused on the extent to which members of staff are providing the most able pupils with demanding work that challenges them to make rapid progress. You have also made sure that teaching assistants have the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge the most able pupils in small-group sessions that are designed to extend and deepen their understanding.
- Impressively, in 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 increased significantly on the previous year and figures for each subject compare favourably to national averages. Furthermore, the progress made by the most able pupils in mathematics is an established strength of the school. You are justifiably targeting improvements to the teaching of writing for the most able disadvantaged pupils because it is the only subject in which their progress is not similar to that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to improve the school contain specific, measurable and ambitious targets
- the teaching of writing improves throughout the school so that all groups of pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and those with low prior attainment, make progress that is as fast as in other areas
- rates of overall absence reduce further.

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

Will Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and members of the senior leadership team. I met with members of the governing body. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority. I met formally with groups of pupils from across the school, including the school's 'ethos committee'. I talked informally with others around school. I met formally with a group of teachers and teaching assistants.

You and other leaders accompanied me on visits to classes, where we observed teaching and learning.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. I also scrutinised a range of policies, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation report.

As part of the inspection, I considered 29 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 51 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 52 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, as well as comments received via the free-text facility.