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Mr Steve Hardaker  
Headteacher  
St Luke's CofE Primary School  
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Lowton  
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WA3 2PW

Dear Mr Hardaker

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

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 January 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 are pivotal in continuously improving St Luke's. You have embedded a culture across the school which promotes pupils' academic aspirations alongside the physical and emotional well-being of pupils. Parents commented on how you 'foster a very caring and positive environment' to provide 'an amazing community feel'.

You and your deputy headteacher have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. You are determined to improve the school further and have high expectations of what you and your staff can achieve. Governors are well aware of all aspects of school life and know what needs to be done to make the school even better. You have created an exceptionally dedicated staff team, which shares your vision for providing pupils with a good start in life, both academically and in their personal development.

At the previous inspection in 2013, inspectors asked you to improve teaching so that more is outstanding across the school, particularly in mathematics. Teachers ensure that pupils know their individual learning targets and know what to do to improve their work. Teachers plan activities to meet the range of abilities of pupils and adapt work in lessons as needed. Subject leaders and the senior leadership team closely monitor the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils. This allows leaders to plan interventions to quicken progress when pupils occasionally fall behind.

The quality of teaching is never less than good and is often better. This is because you ensure that opportunities to share best practice are plentiful across the school and you provide staff with opportunities to learn from others beyond your own school. Several staff, including you and the deputy headteacher, are experts in your subject specialisms and provide support and training for other schools.

Following a dip in results in 2016, the results of 2017 show that the proportion reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 was higher than the national average. The proportion reaching a good level of development in the early years was also higher than the national average in the last two years. You and the leadership team have implemented strategies so that the improvement in progress in mathematics from below-average progress across key stage 2 in 2016 to well above-average progress in 2017 can be sustained. You have targeted a higher proportion of middle- and higher-ability pupils to reach the higher standards.

Subject leaders have established teaching of their subjects through research projects, which pupils clearly enjoy. Pupils engage in a wide range of performing arts events, which promote teamwork, resilience and pupils' personal development. As the driving force in promoting sports across the Leigh, Lowton and Golborne cluster of schools, you ensure that your own pupils and pupils from other schools have the opportunity to engage in a diverse range of sports such as sucker archery, crown-green bowling, new-age curling and fencing.

You and your staff continue to ensure that children get off to a flying start in the early years. Parents told me how well their children have settled into Reception. Staff ensure excellent transition arrangements into the school, from one year group to another, and to secondary schools, which help pupils to settle quickly into their learning. Due to the high quality of teaching and the nurturing school community, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education by the time they leave school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader, together with your deputy designated safeguarding leader, you work relentlessly to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for raising concerns. You and your business manager ensure that all necessary checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are in place.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with training that is up to date so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You and the deputy designated safeguarding leader are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. Together, you rigorously follow up all concerns and make sure that pupils are kept safe. You work well with a range of external agencies to provide expertise to support pupils'

welfare, as and when necessary. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

## **Inspection findings**

- As part of this inspection, I investigated how well mathematics is led across the school and the impact this has on pupils' progress and attainment. The mathematics leader implemented a whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematics. This is proving to be effective, and teachers effectively plan activities for the range of abilities in their class. Teachers are focused on challenging the middle- and higher-ability pupils to develop their reasoning skills in order to reach the higher standards by the end of Year 6. Teachers provide more challenge for pupils through focused problem-solving activities and the opportunities to verbally prove why an answer may be right or wrong. Links with the local secondary school provide opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to attend mathematics challenges. This deepens pupils' understanding. Leaders have arranged for teachers to benefit from mathematics consultants who provide training to develop teachers' planning.
- Secondly, I explored the quality of the teaching of science. You arranged for a science consultant to work with staff and pupils this term. Teachers provide a range of activities to encourage pupils to explore and learn through investigation. Evidence in pupils' books shows that teachers do not always challenge the most able and the balance of investigative work is not fully embedded. For staff who are new to teaching, you have instigated coaching opportunities with specialist staff from a local secondary school to build their confidence in this area. The 'mad science' clubs are fostering pupils' interests to explore the world around them and develop an inquisitive interest in science.
- Thirdly, I investigated the support for new staff joining the school and staff moving to different year groups. You and the deputy headteacher provide a raft of opportunities for the coaching and mentoring of staff who are new to the school. Through the Leigh, Lowton and Golborne cluster, there are many opportunities for newly qualified teachers to join a broader network of schools to share experiences and good practice. You ensure that newly qualified teachers are extremely well supported, and they feel strongly that they can approach you and/or any other teacher in the school regarding their work. Senior leaders have established a programme of checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and opportunities for teachers to observe others in class. You have embedded a strong culture of support across the school to support pupils and staff.
- Next, I looked at the development of opportunities for pupils to improve their writing and particularly spelling. Pupils are highly motivated to write at length through research projects as inspectors saw when Year 4 pupils were learning about the ancient Egyptians. The use of auditory, digital reality is highly effective in engaging pupils. They listened carefully through their headphones to the storyteller, who helped them to engage in role-play as if they were embarking on a journey into a pyramid. Pupils developed a raft of rich language, which they used to discuss

how they felt during the different aspects of their journey. This inspired them to discuss their ideas before putting pen to paper. The pilot project in Year 5 to record unfamiliar words and their meanings and learn spellings is proving effective in developing each pupil's range of vocabulary. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of building up a personal dictionary, which is bespoke to them and which they use as an additional resource to help them with their spellings.

- Finally, I explored the high rates of absence in 2016 of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You provided me with evidence to demonstrate how well you and members of the governing body have continued to take action to improve attendance. You follow up in detail those pupils who are late, occasionally absent or persistently absent. You have solid evidence of success stories. Attendance is higher than the national average for the vast majority of pupils and supports progress with their learning.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of middle-attaining and most-able pupils reach the higher standards in mathematics
- teachers provide more opportunities in science lessons for pupils to learn through investigation
- teachers in other year groups learn from the Year 5 pilot and provide opportunities for pupils to record and learn the meanings of unfamiliar words.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning alongside the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. I held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the governing body, the designated safeguarding leader and the deputy designated safeguarding leader. There were 84 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I held a meeting with pupils and also spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. I reviewed the 14 staff questionnaire responses and the 10 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.