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Mr Timothy Delves
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Dear Mr Delves

Short inspection of St Luke's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 January 2018, 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 2013.

The school remains good.

The leadership has maintained a good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. There have been numerous changes since your previous inspection. Most notably, you have a new and spacious school and the number of pupils on roll has significantly increased. You now have two classes in each year group, except Year 6.

Since you started as headteacher last September, you have had a big impact on school life. Parents and carers, while very complimentary about your predecessor, recognise that you have stamped your mark on the school. They are appreciative of your presence at the school gate every morning. Parents also value the information that you provide to them about their children's learning targets and the progress that their children are making in their learning. Parents and pupils value the new extra-curricular opportunities available, including dance, table tennis and gymnastics. In summary, parents say that you have brought about 'remarkable changes'. Pupils love the new school too and say that it retains its family feel.

Clear and consistent leadership, from governors, yourself and your deputy headteacher, ensures that the school is continually improving. Senior leaders have worked hard to tackle the areas for improvement identified from your previous inspection, most of which have been remedied. This is most notable in the work done to improve the effectiveness of middle leaders and the way that you use data and other information to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. During our discussions, you acknowledged that there is still more work to do to challenge pupils to excel. There is also work to do to improve pupils' writing skills. Added to this, continually improving pupils' attendance remains a key area of focus.

These are some of the areas that I closely focused on during the inspection.

Morale is high among your staff. Those with whom I spoke indicated that the school is improving and they said that you are exceptionally well organised. The plans that you have produced, and the success that you have already had, confirm this to be the case. Together with senior leaders and governors, you have produced robust plans, all of which accurately reflect, and correctly prioritise, what the school needs to move forward to its next stage of development.

In addition to the successes of the senior leadership team, outlined above, you and your team have tackled the areas for improvement needed in the early years. When I observed the Nursery and Reception classes with you, it was clear that your staff are focusing on developing children's speaking, listening and writing skills. This was evident in one of the Reception classes when the teacher skilfully challenged children to use the word 'claws', instead of 'nails'. The teacher then explored children's depth of understanding by asking probing questions, such as, 'Why do you think dinosaurs had long claws?' While outcomes are rapidly improving in the early years, you know that there is more to be done, particularly in relation to developing outdoor provision to accelerate children's progress. Nonetheless, the action that you have taken has been very effective, as are your early years improvement plans.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Checks are carried out to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Your governors understand the importance of safeguarding and update their training regularly. Your policy is up to date and available on the school's website. It takes account of the latest government guidelines and advice on 'Keeping children safe in education'.

All parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children are safe at the school. Those who submitted texts during the inspection, and talked with me at the start of the school day, are of the view that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents are confident about coming to the school if they have any concerns. They know they can approach staff, including your family-support worker or mentor, at any time.

Pupils told me that they feel safe. My discussions with pupils revealed that they are of the view that behaviour is almost always good and bullying rare. Pupils use their 'pastoral books' to note down any worries or concerns, which they share with adults. Pupils know what cyber bullying is and they know how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils know not to share their personal information with anyone online and to 'block' or report suspicious activity such as stalking. At the end of our discussion on safety matters, pupils commented, 'Be safe online and you'll be fine.'

Inspection findings

- To assess whether the school remained good, I identified a number of key enquiry areas that we agreed in our first meeting. My first line of enquiry was pupils' attendance, which is currently just below average overall. Quite correctly, you have made this a priority area for improvement. You are aware that the attendance of boys and disadvantaged pupils is below average. You have good procedures in place to monitor pupils' attendance. Your family-support worker and mentor know families well and are increasingly effective at getting the message across to parents that good attendance leads to good achievement.
- You celebrate pupils' good attendance at special assemblies and invite parents to attendance workshops. In addition, your attendance ambassadors talk to pupils about the importance of coming to school regularly. All of these measures are helping to improve overall attendance, which is edging closer to the national average for all groups.
- Another area that we discussed was pupils' achievement in writing. This is because it has been below average at the end of key stage 2 for the last two years. You have certainly put writing at the forefront of your action plans. Our joint work scrutiny revealed that most pupils present their written work with pride and write interesting and correctly punctuated narratives.
- Some workbooks, and our joint observations, revealed that a small core of pupils need considerable support before they meet, and exceed, age-related expectations in writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling. For example, in Year 2, a small but sizable portion of pupils are still learning to spell common words such as 'school' correctly and write short paragraphs containing the correct punctuation. Similarly, in a key stage 2 class, a minority of pupils found it difficult to write an accurate and succinct short diary entry outlining their daily routine.
- You and senior leaders are aware of these matters, which you have prioritised. In addition, your teachers regularly assess pupils' grammar skills and provide opportunities for them to check and refine their written work. As a result, pupils' writing skills are steadily improving across the school, including in the early years.
- For my next area, I wanted to look at the work you do to challenge pupils to achieve their very best. This focus was due to pupils' performance in national tests at the end of both key stages 1 and 2 in 2017. There was much to celebrate at this time, including improvements in phonics outcomes at the end of the Reception Year and pupils' excellent progress in mathematics at the end of Year 6. However, too few pupils attained greater depth in their learning.
- Your own data indicates that pupils' progress in all subjects is improving across the school. This is because your most effective teachers are constantly challenging them. This was evident in a mathematics class when pupils were asked to come to the front of the class to solve different mathematical problems. They did this correctly and confidently. Of the pupils with whom I spoke, some said that the work was hard, others said that it was 'just right'. The harder work, as seen in books, and the extra challenges that you are giving to pupils are beginning to pay off.
- My final line of enquiry related to the effectiveness of middle leaders in checking

the quality of teaching, reviewing pupils' progress and continually challenging teachers to improve their practice. You have made good advances in this area. Your middle leaders told me that they are appreciative of their new autonomy to purchase resources, arrange training and manage small groups of staff. They are active in monitoring the quality of teaching across their respective phases – the early years, and key stages 1 and 2 – and in English and mathematics.

- Your middle leaders are focusing on further refining assessment information so that they can communicate to parents exactly how well their children are performing. They appreciate your mentoring support, especially in helping to make sure that their assessments of pupils' skills and abilities are accurate. Middle leaders also appreciate carrying out joint observations of teaching with you and the useful professional dialogue which ensues. You say that your middle leaders have been 'on a journey'. Inspection evidence indicates that they are having a beneficial impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make rapid progress, particularly in writing, by:
 - ensuring that teachers challenge pupils to achieve their absolute best
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum
- attendance improves to at least the national average by reinforcing the importance of good attendance, and how this links to good achievement, especially for boys and disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Lenford White
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and middle leaders, including those responsible for English, mathematics, key stage 2 and the early years foundation stage. I met with five governors, including the chair of governors, administrative staff and pupils. I held a meeting with a representative of the local authority. You and I visited lessons, across all phases, and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks.

I examined a range of documentary evidence, including your reviews of the school's performance, your development plans, your checks on the quality of teaching and your safeguarding documentation, including risk assessments. In addition, I looked at various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour and the school's records and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

The questionnaires submitted by 10 members of staff were examined. I considered the views of 29 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 23 free-text messages.