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30 January 2018

Ms Lindsey Kirkham

Headteacher  
Milnrow Parish Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Ms Kirkham

### **Short inspection of Milnrow Parish Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 November 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your passion and enthusiasm are infectious, and you are reflective in the decisions you make. You have established a team that is full of energy and drive. You are committed to providing rich experiences for pupils that expand their horizons. Your aspirations are shared by leaders and governors, embodying your school motto of 'learn, achieve, love, believe'.

Pupils are polite, courteous and confident. The older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously as role models for the younger pupils and as members of the pupil voice committees, including e-cadets, sports and 'eco'. They are very aware of their place in the community. They are proud of their school and the contribution they make to supporting others less fortunate than themselves. They spoke eloquently of the giant bee they created in the playground, from copper and silver coins, to raise funds to support the victims of the Manchester Arena attack. Pupils spoken to said, 'Teachers care about us, they have faith in us and they listen to us.'

You and your staff have worked effectively to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have successfully implemented changes to the way you teach phonics. Consequently, over the last three years, there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the national standard. Every Year 1 pupil reached the national standard for phonics in 2017. The changes you have made to the way you teach writing have resulted in a higher proportion of

pupils reaching the national standard by the end of key stage 2. There is an increasing number of pupils working at a greater depth. You have correctly identified that a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils should be working at the national standard.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. You have established a strong culture of professional dialogue, support and challenge among your staff. They appreciate the opportunities to share skills and knowledge with each other and with colleagues in other local schools. This is particularly helpful for those who are new to teaching. Learning activities meet the pupils' needs and interests and provide appropriate challenges. Pupils' positive attitudes towards learning contribute effectively to the progress that they make. Pupils take pride in their work and understand clearly the 'next steps' in their learning. Pupils spoken to said, 'I'm using the things I've learned in my independent work now.' However, you have accurately identified that you need to continue to focus on filling the precise gaps in pupils' learning.

The overwhelming majority of parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who accessed Parent View online, spoke very positively about the school and your leadership in particular. They appreciate the work you and your staff do to ensure that their children have the opportunities and experiences they need to succeed. Parents of pupils who need additional care for health reasons, or who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, spoke highly of the care, guidance and support that they have received from staff.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership of the school has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, including online filtering arrangements, are fit for purpose. An effective and efficient system ensures that the most vulnerable pupils are identified quickly. Staff and governors receive regular training and know what to do if they have any concerns. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly online, and feel that school is a safe place to be. One of the pupils said, 'The e-cadets help keep the whole school safe.' They also said that bullying is rare and behaviour is good.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection we looked at several lines of enquiry. The first was about attendance. Staff robustly follow up when pupils are absent. For a small proportion of pupils, health-related issues have led to considerable absence from school. You know your families extremely well and work closely with other agencies to provide the support that they need. You have been relentless in your drive to improve the attendance of a number of pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, attendance is improving. You have rightly identified the need to continue to develop ways to engage parents and carers, so that they can support their children and the progress that they make.
- You have introduced a number of imaginative incentives which are having a

positive impact on attendance. When unauthorised absences are due to holidays, then appropriate action has been taken. Attendance remains above the national average, which has a direct impact on improving progress rates for pupils who attend school regularly.

- We discussed how effectively the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has been used to diminish the difference in their rates of progress and their levels of attainment compared with other pupils in the school and nationally. You have accurately identified the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. This group incorporates a proportion of pupils who also have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The changes you have made to the way that phonics and spelling are taught have led to improvements in pupils' achievement in reading and writing, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils. In mathematics, teachers quickly identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Support is given to ensure that they catch up quickly. Consequently, an increasing proportion of older pupils are working at a greater depth.
- Leaders use detailed assessment information to identify pupils who are not making progress quickly enough. Teachers use a number of different ways to identify the gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders have ensured that staff have the skills and resources they need to help pupils catch up quickly. Activities closely match the needs of the pupils and as a result the progress that pupils make is improving. The school's own assessment information indicates that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving over time. However, you acknowledge that a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils need to reach the national standards by the end of key stage 2.
- We discussed the changes you have made to the way you teach writing. Leaders have developed highly successful strategies for engaging and exciting pupils' imaginations and broadening their experiences. For example, to support the work of a group of Year 4 pupils who were developing their use of descriptive writing to set a scene for a story, staff took them to the 'imagination station', where computer technology is used to project realistic images onto the walls. The anticipation and excitement were very evident on the faces of the pupils as they entered a simulated attic room with peeling wallpaper on three walls and a wardrobe. As they were 'transported' to the next scene, pupils exclaimed, 'It's Narnia and it's snowing, listen to the whistling wind.' Staff skilfully questioned the pupils, who described what their senses were telling them. Staff acted as scribes to develop a bank of vocabulary that the pupils could use in their written work. This approach has been developed to enhance the work in other curriculum areas including a visit to a stone-age dwelling in history and the National Art Gallery. As a result, pupils are working above the national average at the end of key stage 2 in writing, and an increasing number are working at a greater depth, particularly disadvantaged pupils.
- Work seen during the inspection clearly illustrated a well-crafted series of activities designed to develop specific skills and knowledge. The quality of pupils' presentation clearly highlights the pride they take in their work and the high expectations set by their teachers. Pupils effectively use appropriate success criteria to improve their work and this supports the progress that they make.

They particularly enjoy sharing what they are learning with their parents during set opportunities throughout the year.

- We also looked at the actions that have been taken by leaders to improve outcomes for children at the end of Reception, so that an increasing proportion are ready for Year 1. The majority of children start school with knowledge and skills below that typical for their age. You have successfully tackled the very specific reasons for the dip in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2017. Pupils have been given the help they need, and they are catching up quickly. You have successfully developed links with the increasing number of nursery settings that the children attend before they start school. Parents commented that their children settle quickly into the routines of school as a result of the well-thought-through activities and events they attend in the summer term.
- Leaders swiftly identify what the 'next steps' in children's learning need to be, in order to accelerate the progress that they make throughout the year. Leaders have ensured that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding they need. You work closely with colleagues in other schools to share expertise, and to ensure that your assessments are accurate. Workshops for parents about how you teach phonics, reading, writing and mathematics provide them with the opportunity to develop the skills they need to support their children's learning at home. The majority of parents contribute regularly to the evidence you collect about what their children have learned. Parents speak highly of how well your staff know their children, and how happy they are to come to school each day.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers accurately identify and tackle any specific gaps in pupils' learning, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils, so that more pupils reach the expected standards by the end of key stage 2
- they develop even more ways to engage parents so that they can support their children and the progress they make.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of your leadership team and staff. I also met with the chair of governors and three members of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I conducted a learning walk with you and we visited classes, where I had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I heard a number of pupils read. I met with a group of pupils during the day and spoke with a number of parents in the playground at the start of the school day. I also took account of the free-text comments and 26 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised your assessment information, your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.