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Mrs Sharon Cowey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cowey

Short inspection of St Luke's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 April 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have accurately identified relevant priorities to improve the school. Your evaluation of the effectiveness of the school is accurate. As result of your actions, the dip in standards seen in recent national assessments is being reversed rapidly.

You have ensured that the school is inviting and friendly. Pupils enter school in the morning happy and eager to learn. You have created a vibrant and stimulating school environment. The playground is full of exciting and interesting pieces of equipment to develop coordination and skills. The classrooms are colourful and celebrate the work of the pupils well. You value the contribution that the pupils make to the school. For example, the school council suggested that adults should wear high-visibility jackets when in the playground so that they could be easily recognised. As a result, the pupils like the way that you and staff are now highly visible in yellow tabards as you greet them in the morning and monitor them at playtimes.

Pupils who I spoke to were keen to share their love of the school. They told me about their favourite subjects and some of the exciting trips and residential visits that they have been on. Pupils in Year 5 recounted their trip to Wales with enthusiasm. They told me about what they have learned about religions other than their own. They said that they could speak to an adult if they were worried or felt alone. Pupils said that bullying and name-calling were both rare, and if either did

happen, teachers were quick to deal with it. Pupils told me that you and the staff are always fair in your actions.

The majority of parents and carers have positive views of the school. Those who I spoke to before school talked about the constructive work that leaders and teachers do to provide pupils with a good quality of education and care. One parent, typical of many, said: 'My children are extremely happy at this school, they are developing skills and values that will serve them well in life.' When considering the wider views of parents, including those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, it was evident that a small number of parents felt that you could do more to improve communication between home and school. Together, we discussed the methods of communication that you currently use. We agreed that you could strengthen this further by including more information on aspects of pupils' performance, personal development, behaviour and welfare issues.

Governors have a strong overview of the school's performance. They are clear on the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be further improved. They are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. They monitor the spending of the pupil premium fund carefully. They play an active part in whole-school development planning. Governors hold you and the senior leaders to account. They ask challenging questions, ensuring that you and the school leaders are doing the best job possible.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to raise standards in mathematics. Specifically, they asked you to ensure that the achievement of girls improved. As a result of your concerted actions, the proportion of girls achieving the expected standards in mathematics had increased to above the national average by the end of 2016. By 2017, the proportion had increased further.

To achieve this success, you have implemented a new system to teach mathematics across the school. Pupils now work on a mastery approach, which provides them with opportunities to deepen their skills and consolidate their learning. This work is having a positive impact on the progress pupils make. Teachers deal with misconceptions quickly. At the end of key stage 2, the number of pupils achieving the expected standards in mathematics rose sharply in 2017. The number of pupils achieving the expected standards and those achieving the higher standards were well above the national average. You have ensured that the leadership of mathematics has developed with regular monitoring of pupils' progress. This is a key component of the school's improvement plan. Although overall attainment was above average in 2017, you are aware of a dip in progress. Actions that you have implemented are starting to accelerate progress for all groups of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated lead for safeguarding, you have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff and governors receive annual training that enables them to have a full awareness of their safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty responsibilities. Records of the checks made on the suitability of adults to work in

school are in place. You work with a range of outside agencies, including school health and children's social care. When required, you make timely referrals to the local safeguarding team. You and two governors are trained in safer recruitment.

The pupils who I spoke to said that they feel safe in school. The parents also shared this view. Pupils are safe on the school site. Signing-in procedures to enter the school are robust. You are aware of safeguarding concerns both locally and nationally. For example, because of the recent news regarding the abuse of children by coaches at sports clubs, you wrote to parents about the work you do in school to safeguard pupils against potential abuse.

Inspection findings

- A key focus for this inspection related to the progress that pupils are currently making in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was high in comparison to the national average at the end of key stage 2. However, published information for pupils leaving Year 6 in 2016 and 2017 showed that pupils made progress that was average in comparison to the national figures. Although the progress that pupils made in 2017 was average, it was an improvement on below-average progress in 2016. Current progress information collected during the inspection shows that improvements are being sustained.
- As a result of your determination to improve progress in reading, you introduced a new system to teach reading in the summer term 2017. This involves pupils working on a wider range of text-based activities. You ask pupils to work through four stages: predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising. You identified that you needed to introduce a range of new vocabulary and embed actions to build on the pupils' inference skills. You have ensured that pupils now have access to a wide variety of exciting texts. For example, in Year 4, pupils spoke to me about their reading books and why they choose them. We observed teachers use a wide range of questions to draw out pupils' understanding of fiction and non-fiction texts. Pupils in Year 6 applied their reading skills to participate in role-play activities based on Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'.
- Pupils who I heard read during the inspection had books that closely matched their ability while providing good challenge.
- Current progress information for reading shows that progress is improving, with significant proportions of pupils across the school making expected progress. However, we agreed that efforts should continue to make sure that more pupils make more than expected progress by the end of key stage 2.
- Your new approach to the teaching of mathematics is beginning to raise the expectations of both the pupils and the staff. Monitoring of mathematics shows that teachers' subject knowledge has increased through participation in a wide range of external training opportunities. Teachers work with other teachers locally and engage in training with other schools across the north-west region. You ensure that mathematical thinking and questioning begins at an early stage. In the Reception class, we observed pupils finding and naming a range of 3D shapes, including spheres, cones and cuboids. Recent monitoring of mathematics

showed you that pupils are now increasing the quality of their explanations and understanding at greater depth. You did, however, find that some challenges that teachers gave pupils did not always make clear links between mathematical concepts and mathematical language. We agreed that you should continue your efforts to secure the impact of changes on accelerating progress even further in key stage 2.

- The local authority moderated Year 6 writing in 2017 and it agreed with the accuracy of your assessments. Key stage 1 writing is improving and current progress information shows that greater proportions of pupils are now working at the expected standards, with increased proportions working at the higher standards. The quality of writing across the curriculum is of a consistent high quality. Pupils have many opportunities to apply their skills to a range of genres. Pupils in Year 2 apply their comprehension skills to write about the construction of 'fire breaks' during the Great Fire of London. Processes that you have put in place are having an impact on the progress pupils make. As pupils move into key stage 2, they begin to check their writing effectively. By the time pupils reach Year 6, pupils proficiently edit and improve their work with little teacher intervention. However, we agreed that your actions to increase progress in key stage 2 are not consistent, especially in Years 5 and 6.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop methods of communication with parents
- the recently introduced developments to teaching and learning in mathematics, reading and writing are embedded so that more pupils make better progress in key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I met four members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. I held a meeting with a representative of the local authority. I spoke to pupils throughout the day and I heard a group of pupils read. I spoke to parents before school. I considered the 88 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I considered the 53

free-text responses, the 144 responses to the pupils' survey and the 31 responses to the staff survey. Together, we visited classes in all year groups. We spoke to pupils about their work and looked at examples of pupils' work from a wide range of subjects. I viewed a range of school documentation, including the single central record. I carried out a review of the school's website.