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Ms Kathryn Hampson  
Headteacher  
St Mary's CofE Primary School  
Church Street  
Droylsden  
Manchester  
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Dear Ms Hampson

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

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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 September 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 and your staff make the school a welcoming place. The environment is well maintained and supports pupils' learning effectively. The school's Christian ethos clearly influences leaders' work. It is evident in the attitudes of pupils, whose behaviour shows a high degree of respect and care. It can also be seen in displays that reinforce Christian values and beliefs and make useful connections to fundamental British values, such as respect and tolerance.

You have successfully addressed the area for improvement that inspectors identified at the last inspection. You have developed reading effectively, including in the early years. You have improved resources by providing new class sets of reading books. You now provide more opportunities for the class teacher to work with groups every week to improve their reading skills. Pupils' progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 recently began to fall behind that of writing and mathematics. You analysed the assessment information carefully and identified the gaps in pupils' understanding. Consequently, there is now a greater emphasis on pupils' inference and deduction skills. There is also a more precise assessment system in place to allow teachers to plan tasks with greater focus.

You have encouraged pupils to have a deeper interest in reading in a number of ways. For example, you adapted the annual 'World Book Day' to become a 'World Book Week' to enable pupils to immerse themselves in literature of various types.

You also promote reading well, for example by holding sessions in the school library where pupils from Year 6 enjoy reading to younger pupils.

The result of these actions is that current pupils make strong progress in reading. They read with confidence and fluency. The proportion of pupils performing at the expected standard or better is typically higher than the national average, using figures for Year 2 and Year 6 for comparison. However, recent progress in reading is not as consistently substantial as it could be.

Pupils with whom I spoke said that they enjoy coming to school because 'teachers make it fun'. They said that teachers challenge them to work hard, but give them help when they need it.

Leaders ensure that they provide well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, they enjoy a range of clubs, including, sports, science and baking. They have the opportunity to go on residential visits and to take part in outdoor and adventurous activities. Pupils also find out about other faiths through the school's religious education programme and by visiting places of worship, such as a mosque or a synagogue.

Pupils' conduct around school is exemplary. They move around in an orderly way and are unfailingly polite to adults, holding doors open for them, for example, and instinctively moving to one side to let them go past.

Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were, in the large majority of cases, positive about the work of the school. Most parents would recommend the school to others.

Members of staff who spoke with me or responded to Ofsted's online survey were supportive of the school. They appreciate the training that leaders provide and feel that it helps them to develop their teaching effectively.

You have been keen to sustain high levels of pupil attendance. You ensure that a member of staff phones the parents of absent children on their first day of absence to find out why they are missing school. You also develop attendance plans for pupils who have repeated absences to encourage them to attend more regularly. These actions have contributed effectively to eliminating persistent absence among current pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records of concerns are detailed and of high quality. The designated lead for safeguarding responds promptly to concerns about pupils. She makes referrals to outside agencies, such as children's services, when necessary.

The school's record of checks on members of staff complies with the government's guidance and is thorough.

Governors receive appropriate safeguarding training and have a clear appreciation of the effectiveness of systems in the school. For example, they review the school's safeguarding policy regularly. The chair of governors has access to the school's safeguarding information to enable her to keep a check on the effectiveness of processes.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about the signs of abuse. They also know their pupils well, which enables them to be aware of uncharacteristic behaviours. Pupils feel safe in school and know how to stay safe. For example, they understand that they must not share personal information on the internet. They say that bullying of any kind is rare and that adults are 'really good at resolving things going on between pupils'.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry, which I explored throughout my visit. One of these concerned progress in reading by the end of Year 6, which I have written about in greater detail earlier in this letter. Progress among current pupils is strong, but it is not as consistently substantial as it could be.
- Another focus for the inspection was the progress of current pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. Evidence from pupils' work and assessment information shows that current pupils make strong progress. For example, in writing in Year 1, pupils develop their skills well, with pupils of middle ability writing more complex sentences such as, 'I went to the beach and it was hot.' In mathematics in Year 2, most-able pupils successfully tackle questions that involve reasoning. For instance, they investigate mathematical statements, such as, 'If an odd number is multiplied by an odd number, you get an even number.' Recent unvalidated test results for current pupils in Year 2 show that the proportion achieving the expected standard or better in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than the most recent national average.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned the progress of children in the early years. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development, though typically below the national average, has improved over time. As the children start life in the early years with knowledge and skills that are below those that are typical for their age, this represents good progress. Leaders carry out detailed assessments that enable them to identify ways to support children's development effectively. They make sure that the environment supports learning well and that teachers plan engaging activities that hold children's interest. They develop children's key skills, such as writing, effectively. For example, most-able children in the Nursery progress to writing recognisable words and, with support, put them into simple sentences. In Reception, the majority of children write recognisable letters and words. Some children write sentences without help, such as, 'I sow (saw) a cow and a hen.' Children's behaviour shows positive attitudes to learning and that they feel safe in their environment.
- My next focus for the inspection was on the progress in reading and writing of

pupils who are disadvantaged. The most recently published assessment information shows that progress in reading and writing for this group of pupils is similar to that of pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged. The school's own assessment information shows that most current pupils make strong progress from a variety of starting points. Evidence from pupils' work in writing, for example, shows pupils acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills at a considerable rate. For example, pupils of lower ability in Year 2 progress from writing simple phrases like 'the bloow (blue) car' to more complex sentences, such as, 'I sometimes like footbol (football) with all of my frens (friends).' Pupils in upper key stage 2 develop a more sophisticated style, constructing clauses such as, 'Years ago, when beasts roamed the earth...' and correctly using more adventurous vocabulary, such as 'obliterated'.

- Finally, leaders understand their statutory duties. For instance, governors know the school well and provide stringent challenge and effective support to senior leaders. Minutes of various governors' meetings show that they ask searching questions about a range of matters, including academic standards, attendance and finance. They hold you and your senior leaders to account effectively. However, the school's website, which has suffered technical difficulties, does not currently comply with the government's guidance. This is because information is missing concerning pupils' performance, the impact of additional funding, complaints procedures, governors' attendance at meetings and the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You have undertaken to address this issue as soon as your new website is in place.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue with their strategies to strengthen pupils' progress in reading by the end of key stage 2
- the school's website is compliant with the government's guidance and remains so.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

With you, I carried out short visits to the early years and all classes in key stage 1 and key stage 2. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records related to the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with you, other members of staff, governors and pupils. I held discussions on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I analysed 44 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I considered the results of a survey conducted by the school in 2017. I also analysed 60 responses to the pupil survey and 27 responses to the staff survey.