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Mrs Anne Homer
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Homer

Short inspection of St Hilda's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 May 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 leadership team have been in post for six weeks. You have ensured that this school is vibrant and welcoming. The school caters for pupils from many different ethnic and socio-economic groups. The school is inclusive and valued within the community. The majority of parents and carers with whom I spoke hold the school in high regard. A view, representative of many was, 'The staff are very friendly and welcoming. The school is a beacon of successful integration in the local area.' You open your doors to the local community. For example, once each week, parents from the community or those with children in the school are invited to attend 'toddler gym' in the school hall.

Pupils with whom I spoke enjoy attending this school and they are polite, well mannered and caring. Every time I passed through a door, a pupil was always there to hold it open. Pupils with whom I spoke in classes and around the school were keen to engage in conversation. Those I observed during playtimes were all having fun. They were well supervised and engaged in a range of games and activities. The behaviour of the pupils around the school is a real strength. Pupils with whom I spoke said that name-calling is uncommon and that bullying rarely happens. Pupils said that their teachers are quick to help them sort out difficulties.

Since the previous inspection, the leadership of the school has significantly changed. At the last inspection, school leaders were asked to make regular checks

on the quality of teaching, ensuring that pupils were clear in what they needed to do and that learning time was maximised. Accurate school self-evaluation has identified key priorities for development. You regularly monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Your monitoring activities include observing in lessons, informal learning walks and talking with pupils. From looking in pupils' books and observing in lessons, it is evident that little time is wasted. Pupils we observed throughout the school were focused on their work. Those with whom I spoke were clear in what they had to do. Pupils' books from a range of subjects are brimming with well-presented content.

At the previous inspection, leaders were also asked to improve pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2, and to support improvements in teaching. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has remained in line with the national average over a number of years and has not declined. To continue to make improvements to teaching, leaders introduced a system of teachers' peer support. Teachers now plan together in year group teams and observe one another teach. Members of staff with whom I spoke about this approach reported their increased confidence and better-honed skills as a result of working closely with peers. Thus, leaders have ensured that, over time, teaching continues to be of a good quality.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective and fit for purpose. The school site is secure and arrangements for entering the school building are robust. All necessary checks on the suitability of adults to work in school are up to date. All members of staff have received 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding basic awareness training. As the designated lead for safeguarding, you have ensured that training is kept up to date for all staff. Several members of staff and members of the governing body are trained in safer recruitment. All new members of staff go through a comprehensive period of induction.

You make timely referrals to social care. Records of your work with outside agencies are detailed. You actively promote safety across the school. For example, in Year 2, we looked at e-safety posters pupils had created. In Year 6, pupils receive training in safe cycling. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are of the opinion that their children are safe and well looked after in this school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on three lines of enquiry. The first of these related to the quality of pupils' writing across key stage 1 and key stage 2. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard in this subject has been below the national average for several years. Together, we visited all classes and looked at samples of pupils' English books, and their books from other subject areas. Typically, the work produced is very tidy and pupils take pride in their learning. Handwriting and presentation are strengths of the school. Writing is

well celebrated around school and pupils have the opportunities to write across a range of genres and for many different purposes. For example, in the early years, we saw that writing is encouraged from the outset across all areas of the provision. In key stage 1, we looked at examples of pupils' storytelling that demonstrated improving progress over time. In Year 5 and Year 6, pupils had written articulate and meaningful letters to the Brazilian government about the effects of deforestation. In the classes we visited, we observed writing that was purposeful and linked to a wide range of curriculum topics. However, we did agree that the most able pupils are not always challenged to achieve the higher standards. The most able pupils are typically expected to complete the same tasks as all other pupils, but to a higher standard. Your school's pupils' tracking data for this year show that, with the exception of the current Year 6, not enough pupils across the school are making better than expected progress in writing when compared with their current progress in reading and mathematics. You and I agreed that more work needs to be done to ensure that the most able pupils have opportunities to write freely, ensuring that tasks are better matched to their abilities, so that they can achieve the higher standards in writing.

- The next area I looked at during the inspection focused on the progress of those pupils who are supported through the pupil premium funding. The progress of disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics declined over a two-year period. The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is low in comparison to other schools nationally. Small and varying proportions of disadvantaged pupils make comparing data between different year groups unreliable. You and the leadership team carefully track the progress of each disadvantaged pupil. Plans are in place to ensure that the extra money used to support these pupils is spent effectively. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has now significantly improved. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in all year groups on track to make the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than that of non-disadvantaged pupils. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils on track to make more than expected progress remains low. You and I agreed that school leaders and governors need to refine the way in which they measure the impact and effectiveness of pupil premium spending to help to ensure that progress continues to improve.
- The final area I looked at during this inspection focused on how well the leaders and governors carry out their statutory responsibilities. The governors have been successful in ensuring that there was a smooth transition of leadership when the previous headteacher retired. Members of the governing body know this school well and are clear about the strengths and areas that need to be developed. Members of the governing body appropriately hold you and your leadership team to account. They support you and challenge you in equal measure. Leaders and governors work with a range of outside agencies to broker a range of support packages for the school. You have a productive relationship with the local authority and you work closely as a partner school with the Trafford teaching alliance. Governors are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and they have ensured that the school's website is up to date and compliant.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards in writing by ensuring that teachers consistently challenge the most able pupils to achieve their best
- they hold senior leaders to account for the impact and effectiveness of the pupil premium spending.

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 Trafford. 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, the acting deputy headteacher and one other member of the senior leadership team. I met with several members of the governing board, including the chair of the governing body, and met with a representative of the local authority. Together, we visited classes, looked at pupils' books and spoke with pupils around the school. We viewed a range of documentation, including the records relating to safeguarding and the school's self-evaluation. I spoke with parents on the playground before school and I met with pupils throughout the day. I considered 29 parents' responses received via free text. I considered 46 responses to Parent View. I considered one letter that was received during the inspection. I undertook a review of the school's website.