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Mrs Georgina Ryding
Headteacher
St Matthew's CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Ryding

Short inspection of St Matthew's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The values promoted by you and other leaders infuse all aspects of the community's work. Values such as faith, hope, honesty, love and justice assume a central role in all that the school does, and this makes a marked contribution to the pupils' excellent personal development. All members of the school community subscribe enthusiastically to the school's ethos. Pupils told the inspector, 'If you dream big you can do anything', 'The words "give up" don't exist in this school' and 'Small people can do big things.' Parents are equally supportive of the school's values and work. One parent summed up the views of many when she described life at the school as 'being like one big family. Everyone is welcomed and included. The staff are friendly and helpful all the way through the team.'

You and your team have ensured that the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. The school's work is guided by a strong sense of moral purpose. This is epitomised in the school's commitment to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils achieve the best outcomes. The school's approach in this area is driven and meticulous and this has ensured that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as others nationally. Indeed, the school has received local awards in recognition of the consistently strong outcomes that have been achieved by disadvantaged pupils over time. Pupils' attendance has continued to go from strength to strength, and pupils continue to behave in a calm, mature and considerate manner. The personal development of pupils has remained a strength,

with pupils benefiting from a diverse range of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example, staff from the school have worked in conjunction with the local women's refuge to develop a unit of work on hate crimes in the local area. Work such as this demonstrates your commitment to dealing with sensitive and potentially controversial topics in a proactive and open manner.

You have strengthened middle leadership since the previous inspection. Subject leaders are now fully involved in monitoring standards of teaching and pupils' outcomes in their areas. They have developed effective systems to assess pupils' understanding and they have taken ownership of developing the breadth and quality of the curriculum in their respective areas. As a result, pupils benefit from a broad and vibrant curriculum. Strengthened middle leadership has also helped you to develop further the precision, breadth and accuracy of your self-evaluation. Governors share your intimate and comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and areas of relative weakness. Governors are reflective, passionate and committed. They have acted upon a recent review of governance to ensure that the governing body contains members with an appropriate blend of skills and experience. They have raised their profile within the school and they undertake numerous activities to test the validity of information they are provided with by school leaders. As a result, you appreciate greatly the marked improvements that have been made to governance over the last 18 months. In tandem with governors, you have devised precise plans to improve the school. These plans provide a clear roadmap to addressing areas of relative weakness. However, your plans are narrow in their scope and they do not seek to build upon areas of the school that are already securely good.

You and your team have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. You have used regular and varied training opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to drive sustained improvements to the quality of teaching. These improvements have been strengthened through effective monitoring, sharp use of appraisal and effective collaboration with other local schools. In particular, your work to moderate the quality of pupils' work with colleagues from other schools has helped to improve the quality and accuracy of assessment within the school. You have also developed the outdoor provision in the early years to good effect. Leadership of the early years is reflective, resourceful and strong. Improvements to the early years provision have ensured that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has steadily increased and is now comfortably above the national average.

You have also demonstrated that you take swift and decisive action to address areas of the school's performance that start to decline. For example, you have orchestrated improvements to teaching in key stage 1, and the teaching of girls and writing throughout the school. These improvements have led to rapid improvements in pupils' outcomes. However, you are keen not to rest on your laurels and you are determined to further accelerate the rate of progress pupils make in key stage 1. You are also aware of the need to modify the teaching of writing further to ensure

that pupils with low prior attainment are challenged to make even quicker gains in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's work to keep children safe is exemplary. Through effective training and the establishment of clear procedures, you have ensured that all staff are vigilant to any changes in the mood or presentation of pupils. Staff have a clear understanding of the safeguarding risks that are potentially more prevalent within the local community. Your systems for monitoring the well-being of vulnerable pupils are rigorous and this helps leaders to have a detailed oversight of how well cared for pupils are by the school.

You have undertaken a range of useful work to ensure that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of different risks. For example, older pupils work with the local women's refuge centre to help them develop a clear understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils have also benefited from some innovative work to develop their understanding of e-safety, including some creative strategies for showing them how quickly different information is shared around the world once it is posted online.

The school works in partnership with parents to ensure that pupils are looked after well. You have used information from a parental safeguarding questionnaire to identify how you can work more effectively with parents. The school's learning mentor acts as a focal point for the school's work on parental engagement. You have ensured that all safeguarding records are precise and fit for purpose. Referrals are made to external agencies as appropriate and you enjoy productive working relationships with a range of partners, including local social workers and the behaviour-support team.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to explore whether the weaker outcomes achieved by pupils in Year 2 in 2016 were the start of a negative trend. Pupils' outcomes across key stage 1 in 2017 conclusively demonstrate that the weak outcomes from 2016 were an anomaly. You have a very clear understanding of the reasons why the 2016 cohort made weaker progress and you have used this analysis to introduce a broad suite of appropriate strategies to bring about improved outcomes. For example, you have improved arrangements for pupils' transition from the Reception class into Year 1 and have increased the level of support received by pupils who only just reached a good level of development in the early years. As a result, the proportions of pupils who reached the expected and higher standard by the end of key stage 1 increased significantly during the last academic year in reading, writing and mathematics. The improvements were particularly dramatic in writing and mathematics. Together, we also observed teaching in key stage 1 and looked at pupils' work. The evidence we gathered from these activities confirmed the improvements that you have made to teaching in key stage 1. Despite improvements, you are keen to guard against complacency. You are

aware of the need to maintain momentum in this important area to ensure that the rate of progress made by pupils accelerates even further. Given the impressive outcomes achieved consistently by children in the early years, you are aware that pupils in key stage 1 can do even better.

- A second area of focus was how effectively girls are supported to make rapid progress. Once again, you were able to present evidence of girls' achievement in 2017 that convincingly demonstrates that historical issues with the underachievement of girls were localised issues, and are not symptomatic of systemic issues across the school. In 2017, girls in Year 1 performed very well in the phonics check. Girls' outcomes in Year 6 were impressive in reading, writing and mathematics, at both the expected and high standard, and are likely to compare favourably to national averages. You also presented evidence from other year groups that provide compelling evidence of girls making strong progress throughout the school. You have secured these improvements by ensuring that staff are mindful of the need to make sure all girls play a full and active role in lessons. You have also introduced a number of girl-only interventions to boost achievement. The school has also consciously sought to raise girls' aspirations. For example, many girls have been encouraged to play an active role in the school's engineering club and they have presented the work they have produced to the chief executive of a local engineering firm.
- Finally, I looked at the extent to which recent improvements to the teaching of writing have been consolidated and built upon. You have rightly prioritised improvements in this important area. You and your team have consciously sought to make writing more fun by using interesting and exciting stimuli to engender a love of writing among pupils. You have implemented many changes to raise the profile of writing and celebrate pupils' achievements. For example, corridor walls are adorned with displays that showcase the work of the 'writers of the week'. We gathered evidence that confirmed the teaching of writing has improved significantly. Pupils of all ages write for a variety of different audiences and purposes. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils, particularly those of high and middle ability, should achieve. The teaching of grammar is a strength. Pupils are expected to integrate complex grammatical structures into their written work. As a result, pupils throughout the school are making stronger progress with their writing. For example, during the last academic year, pupils in Year 6 made faster progress in writing than they did in any other discipline. You are now keen to fine-tune your approach to the teaching of writing. Evidence gathered on inspection confirmed that teachers' expectations of what low-ability pupils can achieve with their writing is not always high enough. Furthermore, teachers are not routinely providing these pupils with work that challenges them to make rapid and sustained gains in their writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders should place as much emphasis on improving those aspects of the school's work that are already good as they do on those areas that require

improvement to become at least good

- the focus is maintained on accelerating further the progress made by pupils through key stage 1
- teachers have high expectations of what pupils with low prior attainment can achieve in their writing and provide them with work that challenges them to produce their best work consistently.

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

Yours sincerely

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and members of the senior leadership team. I met with members of the governing body. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school. I talked informally with others around school. I met formally with a group of teachers and teaching assistants.

You and other leaders accompanied me on visits to classes, where we observed teaching and learning. We also looked at pupils' work in English across a range of year groups.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. I also scrutinised a range of policies, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation report.

As part of the inspection, I considered 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 33 responses to the pupils' questionnaire, 29 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, as well as comments received via the free-text facility.