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Mr Paul Jameson
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Dear Mr Jameson

Short inspection of St Luke's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. During this time, the school roll has increased and the premises have been extended to provide more learning space for pupils. There have been a number of staffing changes, including at senior leadership level, since the last inspection. These changes have increased the school's capacity to maintain its focus on providing a good quality of education for its pupils. You have a cohesive, enthusiastic and talented team in place to continue to take the school forward.

You and your leadership team have strived to create a school where pupils and staff feel safe and happy. You want staff to feel a sense of belonging in the school and feel that they are valued. Staff are overwhelmingly positive in support of the school and your leadership, and commented, 'We are not just colleagues, we are members of one family who all work together to ensure all children receive the best experiences and learning.' Pupils also feel safe and happy in school. Almost all pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and that they enjoy their learning through 'fun' activities. Parents' views are supportive of this and the vast majority of parents believe that their children are well looked after.

Your pupils are well mannered and happy. They wear their uniform smartly and take great pride in their work. Pupils express themselves confidently and can discuss their learning sensibly with peers and adults. Across the school, it is clear to see why your pupils enjoy their learning. You have ensured that every classroom celebrates pupils' work and, as such, the learning environment is vibrant and

eye-catching. All staff have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. You ensure that, from the early years to key stage 2, pupils take pride in their work and present their work well. The work the school has done on handwriting, for example, is clear to see in displays in many classrooms. Writing is a notable strength across the school.

You and your deputy headteacher are keenly aware of the school's strengths and the areas which need to be developed further. The school's self-evaluation is honest and clear, and leads to improvement plans which are checked by governors and are beginning to show impact in all areas. The local authority has been a valuable source of support in evaluating the work of the school with you, and in ensuring that governors hold leaders to account through challenging questions. You have appreciated this support and used it well to help you move the school forward.

Governors, senior leaders and staff have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. At the previous inspection, inspectors identified the need to raise achievement by providing a wider range of activities to interest and engage all pupils. In response, leaders have created opportunities through the curriculum for all year groups to engage in activities to make their learning more exciting, such as visits to Roman Chester, Altrincham air raid shelter and the Imperial War Museum. Outside agencies regularly present workshops on music and performing arts. Visits from theatre groups also enrich the learning experiences for pupils.

Following the previous inspection, you also rightly focused on ensuring high expectations to enable pupils to produce their best work in all lessons. You and your leadership team responded swiftly to this need and ensure that there is in-depth monitoring of teaching and learning, with a focus on the progress of pupils. You have extended the roles of middle leaders so that they now also check on the quality of learning in books and lessons. You ensure that carefully targeted training is matched to individuals, and clearly linked to school improvement priorities and performance management objectives. As a result, staff at all levels are accountable for the progress and achievement of pupils.

The previous inspection also identified the need for leaders to summarise the progress of pupils. You have introduced a rigorous assessment system and now routinely analyse data to check on pupils' progress. This enables you and your staff to quickly identify any underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics, and to address this through timely and appropriate interventions. You have recognised that this good practice is yet to be developed across the wider curriculum.

You and the governors have high aspirations for all pupils at St Luke's and are well on the way to realising them. Your pupils behave extremely well throughout the school. Their exemplary behaviour is a result of pupils enjoying their work and enjoying their environment. Pupils look out for each other and play energetically, but responsibly and safely. Parents appreciate how senior staff meet and greet parents and children every morning as this means they can often relay minor concerns and discuss their child with school leaders. A small minority of parents are

not wholly satisfied with home-school communication. The approachability of staff and the individualised support for pupils are cited frequently by parents as strengths, however. Parents rightly have confidence in your leadership, as do staff and governors.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps for the school to improve further. First, you acknowledge that you will continue to improve reading across the school, especially for middle-ability pupils. Leaders' work on developing a love of reading is beginning to have impact. In discussions with the inspector, pupils were excited when talking about their reading, commenting, 'Every time I read, my imagination goes wild.' Second, you acknowledge that you need to develop strategies for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress across the wider curriculum and by their prior attainment. You, leaders and governors will then know how well the most able and least able pupils are progressing. Governors will then be able to hold you rigorously to account for the progress of pupils across all year groups and across the wider curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils, parents and staff have absolute confidence in leaders' ability to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding procedures are thorough, relevant and understood by all staff. Your recruitment checks are sound and all safeguarding policies meet the statutory requirements. All staff receive up-to-date training and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. External agencies are used appropriately to support pupils and their families.

Pupils trust the adults in school and say that they would talk to them if they had any concerns or worries. Pupils report that bullying rarely occurs but, if it does, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Pupils are taught how to keep safe, both personally and online. Pupils can talk with confidence about the dangers of social media and how important it is to treat everyone with respect.

Inspection findings

- Leaders are committed to driving further improvements at St Luke's. Everyone is ambitious for pupils to succeed and staff work well together with this as their aim. Middle leaders support each other well in overseeing the quality of teaching and learning in their key stage. Teachers plan collaboratively with each other and with teaching assistants to make sure that the needs of individual pupils are well met with high-quality teaching.
- The early years team has been successful in improving outcomes for children so that the majority of children achieve a good level of development above the national average. Attainment of disadvantaged children is a focus for leaders as very few disadvantaged children have reached a good level of development in the past three years. Measures are in place and planned to support this small number of children, including developing an outdoor phonics area to engage children in more active learning.

- Achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check is in line with national averages. The teaching of phonics is capturing pupils' interest early and engaging them in their reading of simple words. Some Reception children were writing 'cow' and 'now' with confidence and could read words like 'hook' and 'book'.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils show a pride in their work and present their work very well. Pupils are engaged with their learning and make good progress as a result. In a Year 2 English lesson, pupils were writing poems about a family member using 'effective and ambitious' adjectives. Pupils were so excited to act out their poems using phrases like 'sleeps noisily' and 'behaves naughtily' while other pupils listened carefully and with respect. Pupils gave helpful suggestions to each other to improve their verbs and adjectives, showing excellent teamwork skills.
- Progress at the end of Year 6 is broadly average despite pupils getting off to a strong start in key stage 1. Leaders are aware that progress needs to be increased during key stage 2 so that pupils attain and progress well. Test results compare well with national averages, but senior leaders know that some pupils could make even better progress during key stage 2.
- Progress in reading is weaker than that in writing and mathematics, particularly for middle-ability pupils. Leaders have taken prompt action to resolve this issue by appointing a lead teacher for reading who has implemented many effective strategies, working alongside other strong middle leaders.
- Pupils are enjoying their reading more. All pupils have visited the local library, enrolled and some have borrowed books. The approach to reading lessons across all year groups is consistent and pupils read together for pleasure while more intensive work is done with small groups of pupils. Skilful questions are woven into the reading sessions to challenge pupils' understanding of the text and develop their inference and vocabulary skills.
- Careful tracking of reading ages and spelling ages shows that the majority of pupils are now making good progress in reading. Particular successes have been seen with pupils who attend the lunchtime reading club where older pupils help the younger pupils with their reading. Pupils are proud of this responsibility and are keen to get involved.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are carefully monitored and their attendance is improving this year. Each pupil is known very well by class teachers, teaching assistants and the special educational needs coordinator. As a result, interventions are well suited to pupils' needs and additional support is timely and effective. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good, particularly in key stage 1.

- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is in line with that of their peers. This is because pupil premium funding is spent appropriately. Additional support and resources are used to diminish any differences, particularly in social and emotional development and reading. Leaders closely monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that any underachievement can be swiftly addressed.
- Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils are aware of the importance of British values such as respect and tolerance, and these are closely linked with the school's teaching of gospel values. Pupils are developing into well-rounded citizens who care for each other and want to make a difference. This can be seen in the charity work undertaken by pupils and in the way they take care of each other in school. When talking about differences, pupils commented that 'we are all one family around the world – God's family – and this means we should treat each other the same'. Pupils know about other religions and can talk confidently about what they have learned about Judaism, Christianity and Islam, for example.
- Members of the governing body are clearly committed, passionate and supportive of the school and your leadership. They are rightly proud of all of the pupils at St Luke's and are determined to ensure the best outcomes possible for pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the teaching of reading and the work to instil a love of reading continue to develop, so that the rates of progress of pupils, including middle-ability pupils, increase further
- new assessment and tracking systems are further embedded, so that middle leaders, senior leaders and governors know how well groups of pupils are progressing, particularly across the wider curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the lead teachers for English and reading, and members of the governing body. In addition, I met with a representative from the local authority. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You and your deputy headteacher accompanied me on visits to all classes where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some books. I examined a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, attendance information, a range of policies, and the school's curriculum and assessment information.

I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered 79 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 41 responses from parents to Ofsted's free text service, 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 56 pupil responses. I also spoke to parents informally on the playground.