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Mrs Saeeda Ishaq
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Dear Mrs Ishaq

Short inspection of St Luke's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 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. Meeting the needs of the diverse and constantly changing community that the school serves is at the top of leaders' list of priorities. You do this very successfully. The funded breakfast club is extremely well attended and gets pupils' days off to a good start. You provide practical support for families, including many who are new to the country and speak little English. The great majority of parents are very positive about the school and appreciate both the academic and pastoral support that their children receive.

Pupils are well mannered and articulate. They provide a warm welcome to visitors to the school and are keen to talk about the many things that they enjoy, in terms of both lessons and out-of-hours activities. For many pupils, the highlights of their time at St Luke's are the annual residential trips to the Peak District. Others are proud to have the chance to represent their school in different sports competitions, including football, cross-country running and tri-golf. Pupils' behaviour in class and around school is consistently good and pupils support each other well, making sure that newly arrived pupils feel at home and settle in quickly. Relationships between staff and pupils throughout the school are first-class.

You and your fellow leaders place great importance on providing pupils with a broad and rich curriculum that deepens their knowledge and experience of the world around them. St Luke's has successful links with schools in China and Australia. Leaders also ensure that pupils have the opportunity to go on regular school visits and take part in activities that enhance their learning, such as outdoor education.

The school itself provides a vibrant and attractive learning environment, with displays celebrating pupils' work in subjects such as science and history and providing a showcase for some high-quality artwork.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Attainment in key stage 1 is rising. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading and mathematics in the provisional 2018 results rose to be in line with other schools nationally, while outcomes in writing also improved, albeit not as quickly. More of the most able pupils were working at greater depth by the end of Year 2, although again the picture was notably stronger in mathematics and reading. The school has a wealth of tracking information which is used to ensure that additional support is well targeted. Teachers typically use questions skilfully to probe and develop pupils' learning.

Leaders and governors have a well-informed and realistic view of the school's strengths, and potential areas for further improvement. These include ensuring that progress and attainment in reading in key stage 2 catch up with what pupils achieve in writing and mathematics. Your plans for school improvement link well to the school's self-evaluation and plot a clear course ahead for St Luke's to continue to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has successfully established a strong safeguarding culture at St Luke's. The school website provides parents with helpful information about keeping their children safe online, and pupils also have a good understanding of e-safety. For example, they know not to give out personal information over the internet. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that their teachers will look after them.

Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. Leaders make sure that the proper checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children. Records of these checks, along with other records relating to safeguarding, are detailed and of a good quality. Leaders work well with other agencies to ensure that concerns about pupils' welfare are swiftly addressed so that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these looked at how effectively phonics is taught, as the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently below the national average.
- Teachers regularly check on pupils' progress in learning phonics, and phonics work is planned at different levels according to pupils' prior learning. Staff who deliver phonics sessions have all had suitable training and model sounds and blends well. By the time they reach Year 2, most pupils use their knowledge of

phonics to help them to decode unfamiliar words when they are reading.

- There is, however, room for improvement in phonics provision. The resources that staff use when delivering phonics sessions come from a range of sources and are not consistently well matched to pupils' learning needs. This is particularly true for pupils who are new to learning English, where some resources require a knowledge of English vocabulary that they have not yet developed. Similarly, some phonics sessions fail to engage pupils' attention fully, and when this is the case pupils' learning is less secure.
- My second line of enquiry considered an apparent gap in attainment in key stage 2, where the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading has been below average in two of the last three years. This is in contrast to outcomes in writing and mathematics, which are now consistently at least in line with other schools nationally.
- Leaders have recognised this seeming anomaly in results, and have analysed pupils' tests to try to identify the reason behind it. They have realised that there are a number of contributory factors, including limitations in pupils' vocabulary and a previous lack of opportunity to develop and apply higher-order reading skills. Leaders have taken swift and decisive action to address these areas, buying in new reading comprehension materials and increasingly focusing on broadening pupils' vocabulary across the school.
- These efforts have been successful. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 use dictionaries and thesauruses with confidence and can recall and define challenging words that they have come across in their reading. The older, most able pupils are reading suitably challenging, high-quality texts. They are able to talk confidently about authorial intent, or to explain their own personal reading preferences. Pupils throughout the school are benefiting from the more focused approach to developing their reading comprehension skills. They typically have positive attitudes towards reading and are now becoming effective, discerning readers.
- The final line of enquiry looked at how successful the school had been in raising standards in writing in key stage 1 since the previous inspection, which had identified improving outcomes in key stage 1 as a priority. The unvalidated performance data for 2018 showed that outcomes in reading and mathematics were in line with the national average. However, although standards in writing are also on an upward trajectory, they are still below average both at the expected standard and at greater depth.
- Work in pupils' books showed that an increasing proportion are working at an appropriate standard for their age. Teachers provide pupils with a range of opportunities to write for different purposes, such as writing poems or retelling well-known stories. Pupils are developing their confidence and skills in building sentences and using vocabulary to good effect.
- However, there is little evidence in pupils' books of the most able being challenged to develop their writing further. As a result, very few of these pupils are making the strong progress in writing of which they are capable. Therefore, while there is compelling evidence that the proportion of pupils working at age-appropriate level in writing in key stage 1 is continuing to increase, only a very small minority of pupils are on track to reach the higher standard.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- phonics teaching and resources are consistently well matched to pupils' needs, particularly for those who are new to learning English, so that they make stronger progress in developing their phonic skills and knowledge
- teachers provide the most able pupils in key stage 1 with suitably challenging work so that more leave Year 2 able to write at greater depth.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Dixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you and other school leaders. I also had meetings with three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I met one group of pupils to talk about school life and heard two further groups of pupils read. I considered 14 responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 'free-text' comments. I visited a range of classes and I looked at examples of pupils' work. I also studied a range of documentation covering different aspects of the school's work.