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Mr Jason Heatley
Principal
St John's Church of England Primary School, Hindley Green
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Dear Mr Heatley

Short inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Hindley Green

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained and improved upon the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school motto, 'Achieving, Believing and Succeeding Together', is well met. Excellent support from The Keys Federation Multi Academy Trust has enabled the school to develop in many areas since it was last inspected. You provide strong and purposeful leadership that staff, directors and parents value. You welcome support from experienced colleagues, such as the trust's director of academy excellence. With other leaders and staff, you demonstrate well the vision, ambition and qualities of the trust's 'Spirit of Purpose'. As a result, the school is rapidly improving and moving towards the goals and pledges that the trust makes to its pupils and parents. These include providing a high-quality education that unlocks the potential of each pupil and develops their life skills. Leaders now need to ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values and covers the full range of different people identified in the 2010 Equality Act.

A real sense of togetherness characterises the school. The passion, commitment and enthusiasm that you and your staff bring to your roles are part and parcel of the everyday ethos. All staff who responded to the survey said that they are proud to work at the school. In the same way, all the parents I spoke to and all who commented on the parent survey were glowing in their praise of the school's work. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are

especially appreciative of the way their children are included and the support and care that they receive. Pupils are full of praise for their teachers. One pupil's comment summed up the views of many: 'Teachers are not just here to help you learn but to make sure you enjoy learning, and they do a very good job of it.'

At the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to improve the achievement of the most able pupils. Leaders have addressed this effectively. Although the standards expected of all pupils are now much higher, leaders and teachers never lose sight of the need to stretch these pupils so that they can reach their potential. The most able pupils now achieve far better than at the time of the last inspection. However, leaders are not complacent. In line with your drive for excellence, you continue to prioritise raising the attainment and increasing the progress of the most able pupils.

The school's test and assessment information for reading, writing and mathematics shows that by the end of both key stages pupils have progressed at least as well as might be expected in relation to their prior attainment. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The most recent (2017) Year 6 tests and assessments show good improvements in all subjects, and particularly in reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar. The focus last year on improving pupils' reading skills and increasing their enjoyment of reading has paid off. Proportions of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 and Year 2 phonics screening checks are consistently above average. Provision in the early years continues to be strong. Children are well cared for and provided with lots of exciting activities and resources that develop all aspects of their learning. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children attaining the good level of development needed to be ready for work in Year 1 is above average.

Throughout the school, pupils' good achievement is the result of quality teaching. Teachers assess pupils' standards in all the subjects they study and track their progress. Subject and senior leaders review this information and report on it to directors. You provided teacher assessment information to show that pupils achieve well across the curriculum. Even so, you and other leaders are committed to deepening ever further pupils' knowledge and skills in all subjects. You have identified this as an improvement priority, with a particular focus on mathematics this year. While there is no underachievement in mathematics, pupils' standards and progress by the end of Year 6 are not quite as strong as in reading and writing. Leaders are driving this improvement well.

The governance structure works very effectively. Members, directors and representatives of the school's local advisory committee bring a wealth of experience to their role. They challenge and support school leaders very well and are proactive and successful in advancing the school's development.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children are thorough. Staff training in this area is regular and effective. Staff are vigilant in raising any concerns about pupils'

welfare and safety. Child protection records, including communication with other professionals, are comprehensive. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet. The school's website provides parents with useful information about safeguarding. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying. They consider that this type of behaviour is rare. Pupils are confident that staff will act upon any bullying or other concerns they share, including anonymously via 'worry boxes'. Pupils are well aware of the hurt caused by prejudiced-based behaviour and know that this is not tolerated. Pupils explained that they never hear pupils make racist comments, but do occasionally hear homophobic words or phrases. Pupils know the importance of reporting this behaviour and explained that when they have done so staff have dealt with issues immediately. This practice is appropriate. However, these incidents do not feature on your analysis of behaviour and reports to directors because they have not been reported to you.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance. Most pupils attend regularly and few are persistently absent. There are thorough processes to investigate absences. These include support for pupils and their families from the school's learning mentor. Attendance data for the last two years show a higher than average proportion of persistent absence for some vulnerable pupils. Current rates of attendance and persistent absence show an improved picture. Only a small number of pupils' attendance now falls below 90%. Of these pupils, some absence is due to health issues and thus unavoidable.
- Leaders are committed to providing an inspirational curriculum that deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding and develops creativity, research and enquiry skills. Pupils' good achievement in the range of subjects they study reflects the success of the curriculum on pupils' outcomes and attitudes to learning. The trust's specialist subject teams for art, music, physical education and sport and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) add strength to these areas of the curriculum. They also support the professional development of the school's staff. A wide range of educational visits and visitors further enrich pupils' learning. As part of the STEM curriculum, for example, pupils have visited universities and industry to inspire their interest and raise girls' awareness of career opportunities in these subjects.
- School documents and policies recognise the legal duties to promote fundamental British values, equality and diversity. There is variability, however, in how well these duties are implemented. A strength is the provision for pupils to learn about religious and cultural diversity. Pupils also learn about how significant people, including activists such as Nelson Mandela and Rosa Parks, influenced political and social change. The work and influence of eminent artists, inventors, explorers and musicians are also woven into the subjects that pupils study. Women are included in these groups, but under-represented. The gender equality work of the STEM curriculum is commendable. However, pupils' books, school displays and curriculum plans do not reflect a balanced view of the influence of men and women in the humanities, arts, science and mathematics. Even less well represented is the protected characteristic of sexual orientation.

There is very little evidence that pupils learn about different types of families and same-sex relationships.

- Issues about diversity and equality link to the school's duty to promote fundamental British values. Pupils' understanding of Christian values is very strong, but their understanding of British values is less secure. Experiences, such as voting for school council members and learning why school rules and some laws are important, expose pupils to some vital principles of British values. However, the significant opportunities within the curriculum to deepen pupils' understanding of these values is not sufficiently capitalised upon.
- The school is very effective in its work to support pupils as they move from one phase of their education to another. There is strong pastoral support for new starters at whatever point they join the school. The same is true for pupils transferring to high schools. Leaders have been proactive in establishing working links with the numerous pre-school provisions and the high schools to which Year 6 pupils transfer. Of note has been the work to establish consistency of assessment and mutual understanding of pupils' achievements with colleagues from these schools. In all, the overriding aim of these links is to eliminate any delay or regression in pupils' learning on entry to Reception and Year 7.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum enables pupils to gain a more secure understanding of fundamental British values, diversity and equalities so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain
- subject leaders' reviews include a focus on equalities, diversity and British values
- any incidents of homophobic name-calling are reported to senior leaders and included in the behaviour analyses and reports to directors.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wigan. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the trust's chief executive and director of academy excellence to discuss the school's evaluation of its work and priorities for improvement. I met with members of the trust's board of directors and the school's local advisory committee and reviewed minutes of their meetings. I held a telephone conversation with a

representative of Wigan local authority. I considered a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. I looked at displays around the school and samples of pupils' work. I analysed assessment information about pupils' achievements in a range of subjects. You and I jointly observed learning and pupils' behaviour in a sample of lessons. I noted pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and in the dining hall. I listened to some pupils read and held a formal discussion with a group of key stage 2 pupils. I spoke to other pupils informally at breaktimes. As no pupils responded to the online pupil survey, I considered the results of a small pupil survey conducted by the school last year. I spoke to staff supervising pupils at breaktimes about safeguarding and considered the views of 14 staff who responded to the online staff survey. I spoke to over 20 parents as they brought their children to school and reviewed 10 responses to the online parent survey, including five written comments.