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Mr Daniel Whittle
Headteacher
St Margaret's CofE Junior Infant and Nursery School
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Dear Mr Whittle

Short inspection of St Margaret's CofE Junior Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 10 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of staffing changes. You and the acting deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2016. Almost all the teachers are new to the school. A new chair of governors has been appointed.

You have gained the confidence and support of governors, staff and parents quickly. Aply supported by the acting deputy headteacher, you have wasted no time in dealing with the school's most pressing issues. Your well-judged actions are already making a positive difference to outcomes for pupils. Staff and pupils are delighted by the improvements to teaching, learning and behaviour.

Staff morale is high. They are proud to work at St Margaret's and share senior leaders' ambitious vision for the school. Staff appreciate the clarity with which you have set out your high expectations. You take time to consult with your colleagues about your improvement plans. Before you make any significant changes to how things are done, you ask one or two members of staff to trial the new approach. Consequently, leaders and staff can be sure that all changes are for the better.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They wear their uniforms with pride, take care with their work and listen attentively to their teachers. Staff and pupils told me about how you have 'transformed' the school. Pupils walk sensibly around school, and

assemblies are lively and engaging. Successes, both big and small, are celebrated routinely. Pupils are proud to show you their good work and teachers know their hard work is appreciated. Staff and pupils agree the school is a much better place now.

Pupils' behaviour has improved over the past 12 months. You have put a new policy in place which raises expectations for pupils, staff and parents. You have worked with specialist colleagues from the local authority to better support the very small number of pupils in your school with challenging behaviour. The changes you have put in place have reduced the number of incidents over time. As a result, all pupils get on with their learning without interruption and school is a calm and orderly place.

The school's Christian values are a golden thread which runs through every aspect of the school's work. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on assemblies and think how they can use the teachings to help them in their everyday life. They learn to understand their own faith, as well as to respect the faiths and traditions of others. Pupils get on well together, both at work and at play. Pupils are keen to help others, whether by older pupils helping at playtime or fund-raising for those less fortunate than themselves.

Leaders are working hard to involve parents more in school life. Even before children join the Nursery class, families are invited to 'stay and play' sessions. These visits give parents an opportunity to get to know the early years team and find out what their child will be doing when they start school. The acting deputy headteacher and three governors have set up a successful monthly 'Messy Church'. Over 50 families attended the first session in November, taking part in craft activities linked to the parable of the lost sheep.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve the quality of teaching. You gain a thorough knowledge of the quality of teaching through frequent visits to classrooms. You talk to pupils and teachers about learning and look at pupils' work. You use this information well to tailor support to teachers and support staff. Teachers plan lessons carefully so that pupils have enough time to complete the work set. Pupils are adamant that work is more challenging now. Teachers keep a closer eye on pupils' progress during lessons. Teachers make good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. This helps teachers to make more timely decisions to adapt lesson plans. The school's own records and pupil performance information are testament to the improvements you have made to the quality of teaching across the school.

At the previous inspection, inspectors also asked leaders to raise attainment in writing. Teachers have increased the levels of challenge, given pupils more opportunities to write in other subjects and helped pupils improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling. As a result, over the past three years, outcomes for your youngest children have improved. More children are reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception. Moreover, these pupils are catching up with their peers in writing now. At key stage 1, standards in writing are improving. In

key stage 2, work in pupils' books testifies to most pupils working at age-related expectations. You were disappointed with results at the end of Year 6 last year. You and your colleagues have analysed last year's results to find out where pupils tripped up. As a result, your Year 6 teachers are trialling a different approach to teaching writing which is paying dividends already. You intend to adopt this approach across the school later this month.

Since you have taken up post, you have, quite rightly, focused on raising standards for all pupils across the school. However, you recognise that while this has improved outcomes for the majority of your pupils, there are a few pupils who are not doing as well as they should. Those pupils who have not caught up with their peers by the end of Reception struggle to catch up at every stage through school. You have already put additional resources, including a speech and language therapist, into the early years to help these children overcome their barriers to learning. However, you recognise that there is more work to do to get every child off to a flying start.

Since you took up post, you have prioritised making improvements in English and mathematics. Specialist teaching in physical education and computing has kept these subjects on track. We talked about the importance of turning your attention to some of the other subjects, including history and geography. The curriculum plans do not take sufficient account of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world when they start school. We agreed that you could make better use of the wealth of resources on your doorstep, both in Oldham and further afield, to help pupils learn about the past and different places.

The school has worked hard to make sure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. However, your own data shows how hard it is for these pupils to catch up with their peers. You can see how you and your colleagues need to take a step back in considering the barriers to learning for your most vulnerable pupils. Governors have given this challenge some thought too. They are keen to assign responsibility for the use of the pupil premium funding to a senior member of staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are thorough. Leaders carry out comprehensive checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Staff undertake frequent training so they understand their roles and responsibilities. The designated safeguarding lead and her deputy follow up any concerns assiduously. Record-keeping is meticulous. The pastoral leader makes sure that children and their families are signposted to the advice and help they need. Pupils, parents and staff agree that pupils are well cared for and safe.

Inspection findings

- Governors share senior leaders' focus and determination to bring about improvements. Leaders and governors have not shied away from the difficult conversations which were needed with some staff to raise standards. Governors use a wealth of information to help them do their jobs well. They scrutinise the

headteacher's reports, check on performance data and visit the school to check out first-hand what is happening day to day. Governors' professional curiosity means that they ask searching questions to make sure that leaders and staff do their jobs well too.

- The business administrator has relished the opportunity to work with you to improve attendance. Together, you identified a number of strategies to stem the historical decline in attendance. You have been successful in raising the profile of attendance across the school. No one is in any doubt of the importance of pupils' being in school, on time, every day. Pupils are keen to help their class win the weekly attendance trophy, receive certificates and earn extra playtime. You have met with those families who struggle to get their children to school every day. These meetings have helped you to understand why regular attendance is a challenge for them and identify solutions. Consequently, far fewer pupils are persistently absent now.
- You have made performance management more rigorous and robust. Now, you include support staff as teachers in the process. The objectives you agree with staff are sharply focused on pupils' outcomes so that there is a clear link with the school's improvement plan. Staff appreciate the professional way you conduct the meetings, your encouragement for their career development and the recognition of their achievements.
- Pupils have got off to a strong start this year in mathematics. You have identified dedicated time outside the daily mathematics lessons for teachers to help pupils develop fluency. This means that pupils spend more time developing their understanding, reasoning and problem solving. Already, pupils are more willing to have a go at tricky work and the most able pupils are being made to think harder. As a result, standards in mathematics are rising.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that all groups of children get off to the best possible start so that more are well prepared for the demands of key stage 1
- review the school's plans for subjects other than English and mathematics so that they take account of the needs of pupils and help them to make strong progress across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- The inspector met with senior leaders, and teaching and support staff. The inspector met with the chair, vice-chair and a member of the governing body.
- The inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority as well as an independent consultant who works with the school.
- The inspector considered the five responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the 126 responses to the school's own survey carried out in November 2016. The inspector talked to parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspector met formally with a group of staff and considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff.
- The inspector talked informally to pupils throughout the school day, considered the nine responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and met formally with a group of seven pupils.
- The inspector visited classrooms with the headteacher and checked on pupils' work, both in books and on wall displays.
- The inspector looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's self-evaluation and action plan, as well as a range of other documentation.
- The inspector conducted a review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.