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Mr Vincent O'Brien  
Headteacher  
Chester Blue Coat Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mr O'Brien

### **Short inspection of Chester Blue Coat Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 January 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, along with senior leaders and governors, have created an inclusive and caring community where pupils and staff are valued. You have a crystal-clear vision for the school and want pupils to be independent and resilient learners. Your high expectations are shared by leaders, staff and governors. You and your leaders have your fingers on the pulse of the school. You know the school's strengths and areas which need to be developed further.

You have successfully moulded the staff from the previously separate infant and junior schools into one team. The school is a bright, colourful and cheerful place to learn. You are outward-looking and determined that the school continues to develop. Your school is well respected for its provision for pupils who have English as an additional language in the locality.

Your staff value the many opportunities you provide for them to share ideas and visit other schools. Middle leaders feel well supported and say that they have the freedom to innovate. They carry out evidence-based research to improve pupil outcomes.

You are ambitious for pupils and have continued to improve teaching and learning. As a result, pupils make strong progress by the end of key stage 2 and they are well prepared for secondary education. Since the last inspection, pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have improved. In 2016, progress in reading and mathematics

was significantly above the national average. The unvalidated overall progress scores for reading and writing at the end of key stage 2 are high in 2017.

Pupils are polite and respectful. Pupils' behaviour during breaktimes, lunchtimes and lessons is exemplary. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils develop good leadership skills in various roles, for example as eco-councillors and science ambassadors.

The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of sports, trips and residential visits. All pupils in Year 5 and 6 play a musical instrument. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about a programme, which supports them to become more confident and resilient in their learning. One pupil said: 'Teachers are helpful and give us challenges.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils show respect for the beliefs and traditions of people from faiths different to theirs. They work well with each other regardless of ethnicity, background or ability. Pupils have a good understanding of values such as respect and democracy.

Many parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others. As one parent commented: 'Teachers really care about the children. My child has come on leaps and bounds.'

Governors, senior leaders and staff have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Governors now receive regular, clear summaries of information on how the pupil premium is spent so that they can ask leaders questions about the impact it has on raising pupils' achievement. You have also developed the curriculum offered to children in the early years and key stage 1. It is now a curriculum which enriches pupils' development in the early years and key stage 1. Your indoor provision provides a positive, vibrant learning environment where children in the early years can learn through exploration and play. Provisional data in 2017 shows strong improvements in pupils' achievement. However, you are aware that you need to secure improvements in the outdoor provision and further improve pupils' progress in key stage 1.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of vigilance in the school. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. For example, the single central record is well maintained and up to date. Recruitment checks on staff's suitability to work with children are detailed and rigorous. Staff and governors have benefited from appropriate training and know what to do should a concern about a pupil arise. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Referrals are made effectively and in a timely manner. Parents and pupils say that the school is a safe place to be. Pupils say that there is rarely any bullying. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet because they are taught about risks and know whom to turn to if they have any concerns.

## Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to attendance. You and your leaders are working tirelessly to further improve the attendance of pupils and reduce persistent absence. Despite this, the number of pupils missing learning as a result of holidays taken during term time remains a concern for leaders. Rigorous measures are in place and decisive action is taken to improve attendance, especially the attendance of boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Regular attendance is celebrated through rewards. Consequently, the attendance of these groups is rising and persistent absence quickly reducing. You continue to work closely with families, the family support worker and other agencies to ensure that pupils regularly attend school.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has been below the national average over time. Children enter the school in the Nursery or Reception Year with skills that are below those typical for their age. The newly appointed leader of the early years has established herself quickly and strengthened teaching. Training is used to good effect to improve teachers' subject knowledge. There are now more opportunities for activities chosen by children and this is helping to engage children and sustain their levels of interest. Children currently in the early years make much faster gains in their learning. You and your leaders are determined to build on the improvements in provision seen in the early years, so that more children achieve a good level of development and the outdoor provision improves further.
- You were concerned that some pupils had not reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2016. Pupils are now developing their reading skills well. This is because of well-delivered daily phonics sessions, which effectively target and address pupils' specific needs. Leaders are ensuring that interventions are in place to make sure that pupils are well prepared and successful in the use of phonics by the end of Year 1 and Year 2.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average. You have developed well-thought-out plans to address this. For example, the increased use of practical equipment has given pupils improved strategies to solve mathematical problems and has strengthened their mathematical understanding. There is now a greater focus on reading and ensuring that activities planned for pupils build upon their previous learning. In writing, teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their written skills, vocabulary and spelling. Provisional data in 2017, current assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work show improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points at the end of the early years. However, you acknowledge that pupils still need to reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You recognise that disadvantaged pupils did not make rapid enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. You have raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils' progress and know the barriers to learning for these pupils very well. Teachers are pioneering new approaches as

part of an initiative with an educational research organisation. Pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are identified quickly and given additional support. Inspection evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils are now catching up. You have rightly identified that disadvantaged pupils still need to reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Governors are passionate and determined to see the school further improve. One commented: 'We want everyone to strive for continual improvement.' Governors have a strong understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school. They make frequent checks on how well additional funds, such as the pupil premium, are used to support eligible pupils' learning. Governors support you while holding you firmly to account for the quality of education at the school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- further steps are taken to develop the outdoor area in the early years
- they increase the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception
- the standards that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reach in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 improve further.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteachers, a group of middle leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair. I also held a telephone conversation with your school improvement advisor. I met with pupils from key stage 2 and spoke informally with others during the inspection. I visited classes where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils read. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. As part of the inspection, I took account of 40 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 40 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 20 staff through Ofsted's online questionnaire. No responses were received to the online questionnaire for pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. Records on keeping pupils safe were evaluated. I also undertook a review of the school's website.