

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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3 March 2016

Gillian Thomas  
Headteacher  
Thurnham Glasson Christ Church, Church of England Primary School  
School Lane  
Glasson Dock  
Lancaster  
Lancashire  
LA2 0AR

Dear Mrs Thomas

### **Short inspection of Thurnham Glasson Christ Church, Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 2016, 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 October 2010.

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

The good quality of education highlighted at the previous inspection has been maintained. The quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well. The school is successful because you provide strong leadership. Your vision for the school is clear and understood and built on knowing each child and family well. Staff morale is high. It is little wonder that the whole school community believes in you and is supportive of what you are achieving.

Pupils told me the key strength of the school is its small size and the resulting family feeling. I agree with these views. Throughout the inspection, I saw that you and staff take as many opportunities as possible to create a strong sense of community within the school. This means that pupils of different ages spend lots of time talking and exploring together; during school assembly, playtime and lunchtime for example. The oldest pupils are given many opportunities to become confident in helping and nurturing their younger school friends. From the Reception Year and throughout the school, this means that relationships between pupils are excellent.

Learning outdoors is a regular feature of life at the school. Good use is made of the school's beautiful setting and the local area to enhance children's education. For example, pupils are given many opportunities to develop their awareness of the

natural environment through the successful school eco-committee. The school successfully connects pupils to the wider community in Glasson through links to the local reading group, café, and landowners such as British Waterways.

Governors and yourself have a good understanding of the school's successes and the next steps for improvement. Together you recognise that greater focus should be given to helping pupils apply their good writing skills more widely at school. While pupils are learning much from the new computing curriculum, you have also rightly identified that further work is needed to strengthen staff skills in this aspect of their teaching.

At the previous inspection in 2010, the inspector recommended that the school should involve pupils more in reviewing their own learning. This issue has been tackled steadily and thoughtfully. Pupils now enjoy regular opportunities to review how they are progressing and to assist with reviews of the work of their peers. A further recommendation was the school should develop more opportunities for pupils to link with those from different backgrounds to their own. You have achieved this by strengthening the range of learning that pupils undertake at Glasson. For example, pupils are gaining a good understanding of their own lives as well as different school communities in Lancaster, India and Florida. Together with governors you have improved this aspect of the school curriculum carefully; you are being very mindful to develop links that are genuine and meaningful.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, staff and governors access regular training about the care and protection of pupils. Records of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers are detailed and of high quality. Staff with whom I spoke showed a good understanding of the main types of abuse. They know how to recognise and report concerns about pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders and governors understand their responsibilities to prevent pupils from hearing extremist views. Wider aspects of safety are given high priority by leaders. For example, pupils on the school council told staff they are confident about online safety but wanted their parents to understand more. Consequently, the school is now sharing information and recommending websites about safe online behaviour to parents regularly.

### **Inspection findings**

- You model well the high standards you expect in the school. Because of the very small size of the school, you teach one of the two classes for four days each week. You are just as skilful at making sure all staff make a full contribution to the life of the school. Thus, teachers and teaching assistants are respected for their individual expertise. They have good access to training and receive tailored help to improve their teaching. This shows for example in the good-quality teaching for the youngest children about the sounds that letters make. Staff are united in their praise for you as the headteacher and for the strong teamwork that you create.
- The impact of leaders and staff shows in the continued good achievement of pupils at the school. In the combined early years and Key Stage 1 class,

children make good progress across their learning. By the end of their time in the Key Stage 2 class, all pupils continue to progress well in mathematics, reading and writing. Funding to give pupils additional support is narrowing gaps in the achievement of individual pupils, those for whom the pupil premium is intended and their peers for example. With the wider strengths of the school, a typical parental comment was: 'pupils leave Glasson as fully rounded children, with a broad range of abilities, not just academic'. Nevertheless, leaders want to see pupils achieve even more. They are beginning to increase the focus of staff upon pupils' writing, so that pupils make full use of their good skills when writing in a range of contexts.

- Parents are very supportive of the school. They know the strengths of the school clearly and compliment the school ethos strongly. Parents are delighted with the school's central place in the life of the village. They praise you for the quality of your leadership and your communication with families. Typical words used about the school are 'nurturing', 'tailored' and 'supportive'. They say that teaching and the curriculum are good. They say the school's focus on teaching pupils to experiment with creating computer code is much liked by their children.
- Pupils across the school enjoy mathematics. They benefit from skilled, knowledgeable teaching where clear questions are adapted ably to individual pupils' level of understanding. Mathematics lessons make good use of practical opportunities to make concepts real and interesting. For example, during the inspection, the Key Stage 2 class measured the diameter and circumference of circles around the playground. Cooperation, discussion and problem solving between pupils was strong and supported by skilful help from staff. This activity strengthened pupils' learning indoors about naming the parts of circles.
- Arrangements to assess pupils are clear and comprehensive. Staff are quick to spot gaps or how well pupils have moved on in their learning. Parents specifically commended this to me during the inspection. In the combined early years and Key Stage 1 class, staff record their assessments of children in several ways, including within attractive 'learning journey' records. Leaders understand that because the school is small in size, published information about pupils' progress does not give enough insight into the work of the school. As a consequence, they make sure staff have a thorough understanding of each individual child. This means that each pupil's unique needs are identified, reviewed and tackled carefully.
- Leaders and governors recognise well the unique education a small school can bring. Equally, they are fully aware of the challenges, such as developing staff expertise within a small team. Thus, the governors have supported leaders to make increased links with other schools. Already this is bringing fresh ideas, strengthened expertise and increased challenge for the team at Glasson. The next step is to make sure additional training is secured for staff to further develop their skills in teaching computing.
- The religious character of the school is used well to strengthen the curriculum. In addition to learning about their own faith, and making visits to see other places of worship, pupils have learned much about other religions such as Islam and Hinduism. This has taught pupils to respect

different religious views. A successful school assembly observed during the inspection was prepared and led by older Key Stage 2 pupils. They linked their presentation about water to the need to conserve this vital resource, and they made clear links to a familiar Christian song where water is mentioned.

- The way the school listens to pupils, responds to their views and promotes their understanding of democracy is strong. For example, each autumn, interested pupils nominate themselves for election as School President. They are required to say why they should be elected, then the whole school votes for their chosen representative. The role of School President is highly valued, with responsibility to coordinate the work of the popular school council. Equally valued by staff and pupils is the school house system through which good work and effort are acknowledged by staff through the awarding of points. This ultimately leads to benefits for each pupil but chosen and purchased (with school funding) by a pupil representative of the winning house.
- Pupils with whom I spoke said that they feel safe at school. They praise the quality of care from you and other staff highly. Their frequent attendance and good behaviour around the premises and in lessons shows they enjoy school. They know how to keep themselves safe. They told me bullying is not an issue in the school. Pupils are confident they can tell staff any of their worries and be heard. When questioned during the inspection, older pupils showed a good level of respect for differences between themselves and others. They understood what might be considered to be derogatory language about other people. They respect people with disability and those whose family structure is different to their own.
- Governors bring a range of valuable expertise to their roles and are both challenging and supportive to the school. They know from their regular visits to classrooms and to school events that learning areas across the school are used fully to support lessons. They have a good understanding of information about teaching and about pupils' attainment and progress. They are kept fully informed about staff pay, performance and career development. Governors are evaluative about their own work and ambitious to do even more to help the school. Consequently, governors have a clear sense of their own priorities for improvement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in order to improve the quality of pupils' writing further, pupils are provided with greater opportunities to use their skills across the curriculum
- the skills of Glasson staff in teaching pupils about computing are strengthened further.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Blackburn, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss your evaluation of the school and your priorities for improvement. We discussed how the school has improved since the previous inspection. I observed a school assembly led by pupils. We observed teaching in the early years and Key Stage 1 classroom and the Key Stage 2 classroom. We discussed examples of pupils' progress. Some of the teaching I observed was led by you and we reviewed this together afterwards. I spoke to a sample of staff, including checking their knowledge of safeguarding. I reviewed responses from six staff to an Ofsted questionnaire. I checked school records of checks of staff suitability. I met with the school business manager. I spoke with the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors. I met with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with pupils during lessons, in corridors and at other times of the day. I reviewed the views of parents that were shared through the online Ofsted Parent View website. I spoke with a range of parents at the start of the inspection.