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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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Mrs Gill Finney
Headteacher
Thornton Cleveleys Baines Endowed Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Station Road
Thornton Cleveleys
Lancashire
FY5 5HY

Dear Mrs Finney

Short inspection of Thornton Cleveleys Baines Endowed Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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 Baines Endowed was judged to be good in May 2011.

Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher has taken up post. Three members of the teaching staff have left the school. They have been replaced by two new members of staff. A number of new governors have been appointed since May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

Baines Endowed is a welcoming, happy and successful school in which pupils thrive academically, socially and emotionally. The strengths inspectors noted when they visited your school in 2011 have not faded over time. These positive features are as strong today as they have ever been. Pupils behave well during work and play. They care about each other and treat everyone with respect. Their safety continues to be a high priority for you and your staff. Pupils benefit from effective teaching and creative activities, across different subjects, which ignite their enthusiasm for learning. Corridors and classrooms are alive with examples of the exciting topics that pupils meet each and every day. Attendance is above average for all pupils. The time pupils spend at Baines Endowed serves them well for the future. They enter their chosen secondary schools as well-rounded, considerate and confident youngsters.

Inspectors asked you to improve teaching and pupils' understanding of different cultures the last time they visited your school. You gave these relative shortcomings due weight

and set about tackling them in earnest.

Teaching is improving over time, due to your clear guidance and high expectations. Teachers and teaching assistants benefit from the many opportunities to attend training and to observe good practice within school and in other schools in the locality. You allow teachers the freedom to use their professional knowledge and skills, to shape their teaching to meet pupils' needs and interests. This is going a long way to explaining the high morale among staff, plus their confidence and trust in your leadership. The staff who shared their views are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of school life. A comment from one member of staff sums up the views of their colleagues nicely: 'working at this school is like winning a golden ticket!'

Teachers are highly successful in forging positive relationships which underpin pupils' strong attitudes to learning and respectful behaviour. They help pupils to learn through the precise instructions they provide and their careful modelling of new ideas. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning across different subjects. They mark pupils' work with care, showing strong fidelity to the whole-school marking policy. Pupils cannot speak highly enough of their teachers, who make learning fun and always have the patience to offer explanations whenever anyone becomes muddled.

The promotion of pupils' understanding of diversity within modern Britain is a success story. The leader for this aspect of school life is enthusiastically grasping every opportunity to enhance pupils' experience of the world beyond the school community. The recent topic on Chinese New Year is just one example of how different cultures are explored. The celebration of Black history helps pupils to identify with aspirational figures who have shaped our lives today. A close link with a school in Ghana is giving pupils an insight into the differences and similarities between their own lives and the lives of others. A similar link with a school in the north west is widening pupils' understanding of the different faiths and religions in Britain today. A focus on different family structures, including same-sex family units, means that pupils know the harm that homophobic language can cause. Your work is making sure pupils understand, accept and respect differences. It is helping to stop any prejudice-based name calling or actions, because pupils value others. Consequently, you are very successful in nurturing caring citizens for the future.

All of the parents I chatted to and most of the parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire are very positive about all aspects of the school's work. Almost all would recommend the school to other parents. A comment from one parent is echoed by many: 'Baines is a lovely, warm and welcoming school.'

Pupils are very proud of their school and keen to talk about the many positive experiences they have in class, in extra-curricular clubs and through the special events you provide. For example, they thoroughly enjoyed all the activities they encountered during the recent book week.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and that records are detailed and of high quality.

Keeping pupils safe consistently receives your utmost concentration and dedication. It is a priority for you, governors and staff. Safeguarding is everyone's business, because you include all staff, including those who do not work with pupils, in frequent training and briefing sessions. Consequently, staff are well equipped to spot physical or behavioural signs that may indicate that pupils are suffering from harm. Your detailed records show that you are relentless in flagging up concerns to external agencies. You do not take 'no' for an answer. You persist in getting the right support for those pupils who need help. When this support is not forthcoming, you find alternative ways to safeguard pupils' emotional and personal well-being, for example by securing counselling for pupils and their families. The suitability of all adults who work in, or visit, the school is checked thoroughly to ensure that pupils are safe while they are in your care.

All of the pupils I chatted to, and those who completed the online questionnaire, say they feel safe in school and free from bullying. They are confident that adults listen to them and take action to resolve any worries they may have. They appreciate the 'Whisper' button on your website, which lets them share any concerns with staff in school. This means that no one has to suffer in silence. Pupils say behaviour is typically good and name-calling is rare. Most of the parents who shared their views agree that pupils are safe and behave well, and that bullying is dealt with effectively.

Pupils are gaining the skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe. They know how to keep safe when using the internet. They know the dangers associated with smoking and alcohol, and how to make healthy lifestyle choices. A range of visitors to school, including the police and the fire service, ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe within their community.

Inspection findings

- You told me that Baines Endowed is a good school which has improved since the last inspection. My findings chime completely with your evaluation. My day in school did not uncover anything that was news to you or your governors, because your views of the school are honest and accurate. Consequently, the priorities for the next stage of the school's journey are highly appropriate. Your plans to achieve these goals are detailed and fit for purpose.
- You know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, because you visit classes often to check on pupils' learning. The systems to manage teachers' performance are effective. They are helping to lift the quality of teaching and tackle whole-school weaknesses.
- You are outward looking, seeking advice and guidance from external partners to help you measure your school against the best. Your reputation goes beyond the school gates. The confidence that local authority officers have in your leadership is shown through the work you do with local headteachers who are new to their role.
- You take swift action whenever you spot weaknesses. The dip in the Year 1 phonics check (the sounds that letters make) in 2015 led to a review of phonics teaching and additional staff training. This is bearing fruit. Phonics teaching is well organised, effective and meets pupils' needs. As a result, far more pupils are on track to meet the phonics check this year.

- Members of the governing body are unstinting in their passion, commitment and support for the school. They use the considerable amount of time they devote to school wisely and effectively. They have a very good understanding of strengths and priorities for improvement. Governors are not content to sit back on previous success. They review the effectiveness of governance thoroughly and frequently to help them become the best.
- Responsibility for improvement is shared evenly across different leaders. Everyone has a role in lifting the quality of teaching and making sure that pupils have the chance to flourish in subjects other than English and mathematics. Although leaders are checking pupils' learning regularly, the feedback they give to teachers is not sharp enough to make a greater difference to teachers' practice.
- Pupils' achievement remains similar to that at the time of the last inspection. Typically, most pupils are making good progress from their starting points. The most-able pupils do particularly well. The numbers gaining the highest levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 consistently exceed the national average.
- Almost all children enter Reception ready to learn. Very few have difficulties in accessing activities that are matched to their age. Until recently, more children left the early years with a good level of development than was found nationally. However, standards dipped in 2015 and they were below average. Your information points to an improving picture for the children currently in Reception. Although there are signs of improvement, boys continue to lag behind girls. This is because the activities are not always shaped well enough to their needs and interests.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average. They have remained steady over time, despite increasing numbers of children starting Year 1 with strong skills and knowledge. Recent improvements in teaching mean that pupils are making greater gains in their learning. More pupils are working at or beyond the levels for their age than has been the case previously.
- Pupils' strong progress in reading and mathematics means that they reach high standards by the end of Year 6. Their gains in mathematics stand out. Almost two thirds made more than expected progress in this subject in 2015. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is consistently above the national average.
- Pupils reach the levels expected for their age in writing. In 2015, all of the Year 6 pupils made expected progress across Key Stage 2. However, the proportion making greater progress is below average.
- This is not news to you or the governors. Work is well underway to tackle the relative weaknesses in writing. Teachers are using a wide range of strategies to encourage pupils to write. They help pupils to talk through their ideas before they put pen to paper. They also make sure that writing has a purpose, through ample opportunities for pupils to write across different subjects. Inventive tasks encourage pupils to want to write. I could not hear a single pupil talking about anything other than the task in hand when I visited Year 6. Pupils were completely engrossed and highly successful in compiling a fact file on Mount Everest.

- Teachers ensure that pupils have the basic skills to write accurately. This accounts for their success in the spelling, grammar and punctuation tests. Some teachers are racing ahead with the changes to teaching writing. Pupils' books show that they have good opportunities to write at length. This is developing pupils' stamina, creativity and flair. This strong practice is not yet reflected in every classroom. This means that not everyone is developing as a successful writer.
- Disadvantaged pupils thrive, along with their peers, although their achievement in writing has flagged in recent years. This gap between other pupils in the school and nationally has widened. However, your current information shows this trend is beginning to reverse, due to the careful and effective intervention you put into place.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they raise pupils' achievement in writing further by sharing the good practice within the school, and help all pupils gain the stamina to write with flair and at length
- they help more boys to gain the skills they need to succeed in Year 1 by ensuring that provision in Reception is meeting their needs and interests
- they support subject leaders to have a greater influence on teaching through sharper feedback to teachers following any checks on teaching.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher and two middle leaders. I held discussions with seven governors, a representative from the local authority and a group of older boys and girls. We visited every classroom to talk to pupils, observe them at work and look at their books. I chatted to a small number of parents at the start of the school day. I took account of the 92 responses on Parent View, including the 58 free-text responses. I considered 10 responses from the staff online questionnaire. I also evaluated the 59 online responses completed by pupils.

I considered a range of school information, including your checks on teaching, your self-evaluation and your current action plan. We discussed your assessments of pupils'

progress across the school. I evaluated safeguarding procedures including your policies to keep children safe, staff training and the safeguarding checks on adults who work and visit the school. I also considered the records you keep of any concerns raised about pupils' safety.