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8 June 2016

Mrs Jackie Cookson
Headteacher
Cockerham Parochial Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Cookson

Short inspection of Cockerham Parochial Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Your effective leadership has strengthened the school further, which in large part is because of your energy and commitment. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agree that they are proud to be part of Cockerham Parochial and all strongly agree that you treat staff fairly and with respect. Your compassionate and nurturing leadership style has brought staff together in a shared eagerness to improve the school. Staff, pupils and governors appreciate your caring and transparent approach and have confidence and trust in your leadership.

Parents are positive about all aspects of the school and would recommend it to others. They particularly appreciate that you are friendly and approachable. For example, several commented on how you are regularly outside to greet pupils and parents in the morning. They say staff 'are so approachable, supportive and welcoming' and they are 'happy and privileged to be part of the school'. Many parents value the importance you place on the school being the 'hub' of the community. This is a sentiment echoed by governors and staff.

Middle leaders are enthusiastic and feel empowered to contribute to improving the school. They are becoming increasingly accountable for pupils' learning and you shared with me that this is an area you are developing further. You have instilled a sense of teamwork among staff and established high expectations for

pupils. Together, you ensure that there is a strong focus on achieving the very best for your pupils.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has accelerated across the school. The vast majority of pupils make expected progress by the end of key stage 2 and attainment in key stages 1 and 2 is above that expected of pupils of a similar age. A high percentage of pupils achieve the expected standard in the national phonics tests (letters and the sounds that they make) and similarly a high percentage of children reach a good level of development at the end of Reception. You have a small number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability, but you support them well and they make good progress throughout the school. You are mindful that there was a dip in progress in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2015 and in standards in writing in key stage 1. The plans you have put in place are already noticeably leading to improvement in pupils' learning. All pupils are back on track and making good progress in these subjects.

Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has developed considerably. You have responded well to the recent national changes in the curriculum and to your own observations of pupils' learning in school. Pupils regularly enjoy activities that reflect their interests. For example, one class asked if they could find out more about Italy in relation to their topic on the Romans and in Reception children's interest in tractors led to a popular topic on farming.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to improve the rate of pupils' progress by ensuring that teachers effectively challenge pupils, especially those who are most able. Also, inspectors reported that pupils would make more progress if steps in learning for individual pupils were more precise, and if pupils' writing skills were developed so that they could produce well-structured sentences with accurate spelling. The inspectors required the school to strengthen leadership by involving more staff in school improvement. Finally, they identified that the governing body should develop further the skills and knowledge to rigorously hold the school to account.

Leaders have addressed all of these aspects effectively, and have ensured that the following improvements have taken place:

- Opportunities to challenge pupils' skills and thinking are evident in all classes. This is achieved through teachers' questions to pupils and the activities that they are given. The most able pupils are being given activities that are appropriately challenging and require them to use additional thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate a thorough knowledge of pupils' learning through their checks on progress and during their interaction with pupils in lessons. They are responding quickly to the needs of pupils by providing support, reassurance or, if needed, further challenge.
- The importance of writing is clear throughout the school. Opportunities to write in a wide range of subjects are very visible, as are occasions to write

for different purposes to a high standard. Close attention is paid to correct spelling and there is a consistency in the way teachers skilfully deliver grammar rules and support pupils in writing accurate and well-constructed sentences.

- Staff are now fully involved in school improvement.
- The governing body responded effectively to the improvement area from the previous inspection and now provides you with an effective balance of challenge and support to school leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

There are extremely effective, well-maintained systems in place in all areas of safeguarding and these are clearly understood by staff. Staff complete regular, appropriate and up-to-date training. Leaders have effective relationships with other agencies and you and your team ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met. This is because of your strong belief in the important role you have in safeguarding the pupils in your care. Your persistence in situations where vulnerable pupils needed extra support or advocacy is particularly impressive.

Parents say they feel their children are very safe and well cared for in school. As a result, pupils are very happy and keen to come to school. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils, particularly older ones, talked knowledgeably about the ways that they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online.

Inspection findings

- You have an honest, transparent and accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas that need further development. Whole-staff involvement in school self-evaluation ensures that everyone is clear about the direction in which they are heading. As a result, you and your staff team have good capacity for further improvement.
- You have a measured, nurturing approach to leading the school and have focused effectively on establishing high expectations and consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. You know each teacher's strengths and areas for development accurately. The system you have for checking on the quality of teaching works well as it gives teachers a chance to learn from each other and to receive regular feedback on what they do well and how they could improve.
- Giving each teacher a significant responsibility in school has ensured that they all make a valuable contribution to school improvement. You rightly want to develop this team further, so that your staff increase in confidence and in a shared accountability for every pupil's learning.
- Governance is now highly effective and is a strength of the school. Governors play an informed role in evaluating the school's effectiveness; they know the school well. They care deeply about the school and are keen to celebrate success, but are also rigorous in asking challenging questions.

- The information you gather about pupils' progress is good. It is used by all leaders, teachers and governors effectively to identify which pupils or groups are making progress and which need some additional support or challenge. Your half-termly checks in some subjects and regular meetings to discuss pupil progress ensure that all staff feel responsible for their pupils' learning and give them an opportunity to reflect on how they could further adapt their teaching to meet their pupils' needs.
- You have correctly identified the need to improve further the attainment of pupils in writing at the end of key stage 1 and the progress of pupils in mathematics in key stage 2. To this end, you have taken decisive action, including changing your curriculum and refining the way you track pupils' learning so that their progress can be watched even more carefully. This is already having an impact, with most pupils now on track to make good progress.
- Attendance is above the national average. You shared a clear explanation for the absence of a very small number of pupils with special educational needs or disability. You have good systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality. A pupil getting to school late is rare. The strong, respectful relationships you and your staff have with parents ensure that they have a firm commitment and regard for school and so they make sure their children attend. There is a range of effective rewards for good attendance. Where families are struggling, you are firm but supportive and exercise appropriate sensitivity on an individual family basis.
- Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good throughout the school. Pupils are polite, kind and thoughtful to each other and to adults. Their conduct around the school building and in class is respectful and courteous. Pupils value highly the different areas they have in their outdoor space and play with great enjoyment. Year 6 pupils were very proud to show me their common room and younger pupils were keen to show me the peace garden, where, as one pupil said, 'You have to be so quiet, it is best to whisper.' You pay close attention to developing their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- You have ensured a great deal of consistency in teaching across all classes. For example, the presentation of work in books is of the same high standard from Reception to Year 6, because handwriting is taught meticulously in all classes. There are similar opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning and to be offered challenge. As a result, pupils receive the same good-quality learning opportunities throughout the school. It is evident from looking at pupils' books that steady, assured progress is being made.
- Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and they use questioning skilfully to prompt pupils' thinking. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and make a valuable contribution to supporting pupils' learning and meeting their needs. Work in pupils' books shows good progress over time. Most pupils have a good attitude to learning but some, often boys, can occasionally be distracted or lack motivation. You are rightly looking toward your evolving creative curriculum to add more excitement and 'a bit of a spark' to hook pupils in to their learning.
- Early years is a growing strength and is led well. Most children start early

years with skills and knowledge typical for their age and go on to make good progress. Children are offered a wide range of stimulating, good quality, learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors, that they visibly enjoy. As a result, children are happy and keen to learn. Staff here have high expectations and are skilful at getting children interested and excited about their learning. The good use of assessment information ensures that provision and learning is matched very closely to children's needs. Adults have very positive relationships with children and also parents, who describe the staff as 'fabulous' and 'fantastic'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders, including governors, should ensure that:

- they continue to keep a close eye on improving further the progress of pupils in mathematics in key stage 2 and writing in key stage 1
- they build on the creative curriculum already being developed to ensure that it stimulates and excites all learners
- they continue to develop middle leaders to be confidently accountable for pupils' learning across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of children's services for Lancashire City Council and the director of education for the Diocese of Blackburn. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, members of your middle leadership team and the staff responsible for maintaining your attendance and safeguarding records. I also met with pupils, three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of Lancashire local authority. We visited lessons and I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of 16 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of five parents spoken to before the school day. I took account of nine responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 19 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during lunchtime. I looked at a number of documents, including: information about pupils' achievement; your school self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; behaviour and incident logs; and documents relating to safeguarding.