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Mr Paul Bowden
Headteacher
Slyne-with-Hest, St Luke's CE (Aided) Primary School
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Dear Mr Bowden

Short inspection of Slyne-with-Hest, St Luke's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You provide highly effective leadership and have set a clear vision that has contributed to improving the school further, resulting in a number of strengths. I was struck by the welcoming atmosphere of the school and the strong sense of care and nurture for the whole school community. Staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are very proud to be part of Slyne-with-Hest, St Luke's. You bring staff together in a shared commitment to improve the school. Staff, parents, pupils and governors appreciate your approachable style and have confidence and trust in your leadership. Your wider leadership team is enthusiastic and feels empowered and accountable for pupils' learning. 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 them.

The very large majority of parents who spoke to me, or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are very positive about the school and would recommend it to others. A number of parents particularly appreciate that any issues or concerns raised by them are dealt with in earnest and you and your staff are welcoming and accessible. A large number of parents commented on the school and staff being 'fantastic' and 'supportive and understanding'. Comments from parents such as, 'My children have loved every day' and 'The school instils positive values in children' are typical. This is a happy and purposeful school where pupils, parents and staff have a strong sense of community.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has continued to accelerate across the school. In 2015, all pupils made at least expected progress by the end of key stage 2. Attainment in both key stages 1 and 2 was above that expected for pupils of a similar age. A high percentage of pupils met the expected standard in the national phonics screening check (phonics refers to 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 whom staff support well so that they make good progress. You are mindful that more pupils need to be offered greater challenge, in order to make more than expected progress. The plans you have put in place with this end in mind are already noticeably leading to improvement and the most able pupils are now on track to achieve at a more challenging level.

The school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is a strength. You rightly pride yourselves in the support and resource offered to these pupils. Special educational needs is well led and support staff are thoughtfully trained to cater for the range of needs that pupils present. Parents are extremely complimentary about how their children have settled, grown in confidence and made progress in their learning. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs or disability thrive and make at least good progress.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to raise achievement further by making sure teaching is always challenging enough to meet all pupils' needs and abilities and by ensuring that teaching is consistently lively and engaging. They also required the school to improve the consistency of marking and tracking of pupils' progress so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

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

- Progress and attainment has continued to improve across the school. There are consistently high expectations in lessons and a range of interesting and motivating activities offered to pupils, resulting in their excellent attitudes to learning from Reception through to Year 6. However, you have identified that there is still more work to be done to further extend the challenge for the most able pupils in school.
- Your marking policy is being applied consistently and your systems for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils through the year and over time are very effective. Pupils are confident, articulate and keen to talk about their learning and what they need to do to improve their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

There are excellent, well-maintained systems in place in all areas of safeguarding and these are understood by staff. All safeguarding arrangements have been reviewed and they meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors receive regular, appropriate, up-to-date training including that related to the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. Leaders have effective relationships with other

agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are met in a timely way. You and your team ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are met. Your vigilance in relation to the care and support of vulnerable pupils is of a high standard.

Pupils were unanimous in saying they feel very safe and well cared for in school. They are confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils develop effective personal skills within a nurturing environment and talk about kindness and consideration for each other. Pupils, particularly older ones, talk with knowledge about the ways they can stay safe in a range of situations, including when they are online. The vast majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep their children safe and well looked after. As a result, pupils are very happy and keen to come to school.

Inspection findings

- You have an extremely honest, transparent and accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas that need further development. Your school's self-evaluation and school development plans are of excellent quality and you use them effectively to ensure that everyone in school is clear about the direction in which they are heading. As a result, you and your leadership team have very good capacity for further improvement.
- You have a measured, thoughtful approach and have focused effectively on establishing consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. You know each teacher's strengths and areas for development accurately. I agree with you that it would be useful for you and your team to take some time to look at outstanding practice in other schools. This will support your plans for the next stage of your school's improvement journey.
- Governors play an informed role in evaluating the school's effectiveness. They have used their own experiences and expertise well to support the school. They care about the school and are keen to celebrate success, but are also able to challenge where needed.
- The information you gather about pupils' progress is very effective. The simple, clear approach to collecting assessment information has resulted in all leaders, teachers and governors using it effectively to identify which pupils or groups are making progress and which need some additional support or challenge. Your regular checks and termly pupil progress meetings ensure that all staff feel responsible for every pupil's learning and give them an opportunity to reflect on how they could further adapt their teaching to meet their pupils' needs.
- Leaders are keen to make an important contribution to driving further improvements. They talk with enthusiasm about their areas of responsibility, and are particularly keen to develop aspects of the curriculum which offer pupils first-hand experiences.
- You have responded well to the recent changes in the national curriculum; pupils enjoy, and benefit from, a variety of interesting and engaging activities. A real success and strength has been in how you have used the primary physical education and sports funding to provide a wide range of sports that are accessible to all pupils. Your commitment to ensuring every pupil is involved in sport and competition has ignited enthusiasm from both

pupils and parents, who were equally eager to share with me their involvement and pride. A similar approach to music is also appreciated by pupils and parents, where you ensure that every pupil in key stage 2 is offered the opportunity to learn to play an instrument.

- You have correctly identified the need to improve further the progress of the most able pupils and to offer more challenge in lessons, so that they have the chance to make more than expected progress. To this end, you have taken decisive action, including refining your curriculum. This is already having an impact and evidence suggests they are now on track to make good and better progress.
- Attendance is above the national average and is a strength. You have excellent systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality and you use them to great effect. There is a range of rewards for good attendance. There has been no persistent absence in school for over two years because of your high expectations and the importance you place on pupils being in school. Where families are struggling, you are firm but supportive and exercise appropriate sensitivity on an individual family basis.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are good in school. Conduct around the school building and in class is of a high standard. Pupils are polite, kind and thoughtful to each other. I witnessed a touching response from a pupil who spontaneously clapped her hands and excitedly congratulated her classmate when she had been praised by the teacher for her written work. This is typical of the consideration that pupils have for each other.
- A very small number of parents asked me to consider how the school deals with bullying. However, inspection evidence confirmed that any bullying was rare and quickly followed up by the school.
- The whole school has worked effectively on developing Christian values and community links. You are now rightly moving toward developing pupils' greater understanding of diversity in modern Britain.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to provide engaging and motivating activities in class. As a result, pupils have a very good attitude to learning. There is a consistency in approach across the school in areas such as display, handwriting, the presentation of work in books, and in grammar and punctuation rules. This ensures that pupils build on their skills year on year and make good progress. This can be demonstrated by work in pupils' books, which shows good progress over time. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and make a valuable contribution to supporting pupils' learning and meeting pupils' needs.
- The importance placed on developing pupils' writing is prominent throughout the school. Opportunities to write across the curriculum are clearly evident, as are occasions to write for different purposes to a high standard.
- Most children start early years with skills and knowledge typical for their age and go on to make good progress. You have found that an increasing number of pupils are starting school with levels of development below what would be expected, and some of these children have speech and language difficulties. These children are served well through good-quality provision and the opportunity to work with a teaching assistant who is skilled in

supporting children's development. There is a wide range of stimulating, good-quality learning experiences available to children and they visibly enjoy engaging in them. As a result, children are happy and keen to learn. Writing and phonics have a strong focus and, as a result, the quality of children's writing by the time they leave Reception is high. The effective use of assessment information ensures that provision and learning are matched very closely to children's needs. Adults have very positive relationships with children and support them well in their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders, including governors, should ensure that:

- they continue to keep a close eye on improving further the progress of the most able pupils so that they continue to be challenged and extended in lessons
- they provide opportunities to learn from outstanding practice in teaching and learning in other schools
- they consider further opportunities to develop pupils' understanding and knowledge of diversity in modern Britain.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Blackburn and the director of children's services for Lancashire. 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, your deputy, members of your middle leadership team and the staff responsible for maintaining attendance and safeguarding records. I also met with pupils, six 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 the 70 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of six parents spoken to before the school day. I took account of 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. 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.