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Mrs Claire Greenway
Headteacher
Chorley, St. James' Church of England Primary School
Devonport Way
Chorley
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Dear Mrs Greenway

Short inspection of Chorley St. James' Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 June 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. The school has improved greatly since the last inspection because of your clear vision and dynamic leadership. Your passion for providing pupils with a memorable educational experience is highly effective. You, and all staff, have created a strong sense of care and nurture for the whole school community. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to be part of Chorley St. James' and all agree that the school is well led, and they are treated fairly and with respect. You are ably assisted by your deputy and together you have led staff in a shared commitment and enthusiasm to improve the school. The high expectations you have set ensure that there is a strong focus on achieving the very best for your pupils.

The overwhelming 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 the school is supportive and you and your staff are welcoming and approachable. A large number of parents commented on the school being, 'warm, friendly and caring'. Comments from parents such as, 'our children have flourished,' 'the school instils strong positive values in children' and 'they make learning memorable and fun,' are typical. This is a happy and purposeful school where pupils, parents and staff have a strong sense of being part of a school 'family'.

A high percentage of children reached a good level of development at the end of Reception in 2015 and the percentage of pupils that met the expected standard in the national phonics screening check (the sounds that letters represent in words), was comparable to pupils of a similar age.

You are mindful that standards at the end of key stage 1 could be further improved and that the most able pupils need to be offered greater challenge. The plans you have put in place are already noticeably leading to improvement in these areas; the majority of most-able pupils are now on track to achieve higher standards.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has accelerated across the school. In 2015, the vast majority of pupils made at least expected progress by the end of key stage 2. The proportion of pupils who made more than expected progress rose, particularly in mathematics. Attainment in key stage 2 was comparable with that expected for pupils of a similar age. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well by staff and they continue to make good progress by the end of key stage 2.

Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has developed considerably. You have responded well to the recent national changes and have created a curriculum that is distinctive to the school. You have done this through using your Christian values and the inspiring development of 'promises to pupils'. These promises identify a number of experiences that Chorley St. James' will offer pupils during their school career. They have been contributed to by parents, pupils, staff and governors and cover a wide range of experiences. For example, your pupils will at various times speak in public, see a chick hatch, get muddy, enjoy a pantomime, and have a day trip to London.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to increase pupils' learning and progress further by making sure teaching closely matched tasks to the needs and abilities of learners. They also asked you to ensure that information and communications technology was used more effectively to stimulate learning further and support the development of pupils' skills as independent learners. Finally, they required the school to make sure that questioning was used consistently well to further develop pupils' reasoning and speaking skills.

Leaders have, for the most part, addressed all of these aspects effectively 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 a very positive attitude to learning from Reception through to Year 6. However, you have identified that there is still more work to be done on further extending the challenge for the most able pupils in school.
- Pupils and staff now use information and communications technology very effectively. For example, teachers use tablets to take photographs of pupils' writing which they then use to help pupils discuss and learn from each other's work. Children in Reception make good use of computers to improve their phonics skills and there was evidence of pupils in all classes using

tablets and computers to find out more about their activities.

- Teachers have developed a good level of questioning to draw out pupils' thinking. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their learning with each other; this has resulted in them having a greater confidence and deeper understanding about what they are learning. It also provides teachers with the opportunity to correct errors in pupils' thinking or understanding if needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

There are excellent, well-maintained systems in place in all areas of safeguarding and staff understand them. All safeguarding arrangements have been reviewed to meet statutory requirements. Regular and appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken and up to date, including that related to the 'Prevent' duty. The governor responsible for safeguarding regularly monitors and checks records. You and your team ensure that pupils are kept safe and that their welfare needs are met. Your vigilance around the care and support of vulnerable pupils is of a high standard, as is the quality of your safeguarding records. Leaders have effective relationships with other agencies, and are persistent in situations where vulnerable pupils or families need extra support or advocacy.

Pupils were unanimous in saying they feel very happy, 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. They talk with knowledge about the ways they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The vast majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep their children safe and well looked after.

Inspection findings

- Your school's self-evaluation and school development plans are effective. They are appropriately detailed, reflective and used well to ensure that everyone in school is clear about the direction they are heading. You and your leadership team have a very good capacity to secure further improvement.
- Your drive for improvement has been 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 very well. Staff have had the opportunity to benefit from a range of training and development. I agree with you that it would be useful for you and your team to continue to look at outstanding practice in teaching and learning. This will support your plans for the next stage of your school's improvement journey.
- Governors are very effective and play an informed role in evaluating the school's effectiveness. Governors have used their own experiences and expertise well to play an active role in the life of the school. They share your passion for providing the best for pupils; they are very supportive but are also able to challenge where needed.
- The information you gather about pupils' progress is comprehensive. You

have created an approach to collecting assessment information that is manageable for you and your staff. This 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. The system has also been effective in encouraging teachers in lessons to focus on the skills and attributes that pupils have and need to gain. Your regular checks and meetings ensure that all staff feel responsible for every pupil's learning and gives 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 the development of the curriculum, particularly when it involves developing aspects of the curriculum in more depth.
- You have correctly identified the need to improve further the attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 1. In particular, you are focusing on improving 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 English and mathematics curriculum. This is already having an impact and evidence suggests that the majority of your most-able pupils are on track to make good and better progress.
- Attendance is now above the national average. You have meticulous systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality. Pupils appreciate the range of rewards for good attendance. Persistent absence is rare 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.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are strong in school. Conduct around the school building and in class is of a very high standard. Pupils are polite, kind and thoughtful to each other. Pupils said that if someone falls over, 'we would run to help them up.' One pupil commented that everyone is welcome, 'we treat everyone the same'. This is typical of the consideration that pupils have for each other.
- The whole school has worked effectively on developing Christian values. These have been woven through the curriculum and are apparent in the attitudes of staff and pupils. A number of pupils are part of an ethos group called 'the ark'. They are very active within the school, lead assemblies, organise fundraising events and even plan annual ethos conferences which other schools are invited to attend. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in their school and wider community. The school council has been instrumental in developing outdoor spaces in the school and has inventively created a 'fort area' for den building and an 'enchanted wood area' that will be an outdoor classroom. These developments indicate your commitment to developing pupils' creativity and responsibility.
- 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 consistent focus throughout the school on building pupils' deeper understanding of mathematical skills. Pupils are encouraged

to explain and talk about the skills they use. This they do with enthusiasm and confidence. Work in pupils' mathematics and writing books indicates at least good progress over time. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and make a valuable contribution to supporting pupils' learning and meeting pupils' needs.

- Signs of the importance that you place on reading and writing are prominent throughout the school. Pupils' love of reading has been fostered through the introduction of a 'reading challenge'. Pupils are encouraged to read, or have read to them, 100 books by the time they leave Year 6. Opportunities to write across the curriculum are clearly evident, as are occasions to write for different purposes to a high standard. For example in Year 1, pupils were busy writing about the characters in Maurice Sendak's 'Where the wild things are'. They were thrilled and animated to share that in the night the wild things had visited the classroom and had had a party. They pointed to napkins and crumbs on the floor where the 'wild things' had eaten the teacher's cakes.
- Most children start the early years with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. However, through very good-quality provision and teaching in Nursery and Reception, children make good and often better progress by the time they leave. 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, phonics and number are a strong focus and, as a result, children's skills in these areas by the time they leave Reception are at least good. 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 also parents, who describe staff as, 'easy to talk to' and 'amazing'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders, including governors, should ensure that:

- they improve further the progress of the most able pupils in key stage 1 by continuing to challenge and extend their thinking
- they continue to build on opportunities to learn from outstanding practice in teaching and learning.

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 member of staff responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. I also met with pupils, six governors, and spoke to the chair of the governing body and a representative of Lancashire local authority on the telephone. We visited lessons and I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of the 37 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of 13 parents spoken to before or during 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.