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Mrs Christine Lancashire
Headteacher
St Peter's Smithills Dean CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Lancashire

Short inspection of St Peter's Smithills Dean CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017, 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 last inspection. Christian values permeate all aspects of the school's work, creating a shared sense of commitment among staff and governors, who work effectively as a team. Leaders and staff embrace change. For example, all have adopted a new system of assessment which allows leaders to monitor effectively pupils' progress.

Relationships between staff and pupils in the school are a strength. Pupils value and trust the staff. There is a strong sense of mutual respect. The warm, safe environment creates an atmosphere of calm purposefulness which is reflective of your leadership. The bright displays around the school exemplify the work done to promote British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, effectively showing what it means to be a 'St Peter's citizen'. Pupils show respect for each other's opinions and work well together in lessons. One parent summarised this as creating a 'real sense of belonging'.

Pupils make good progress overall during their time at school. Your progress information shows that a high percentage of pupils are on track to meet the targets for their age group. Your effective self-evaluation accurately identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses. You acknowledge that, while the school is good, it can improve further.

However, leaders' overemphasis on pupils attaining age-related expectations has hindered the most able pupils from achieving beyond these expectations. Governors' and leaders'

expectations of what these pupils are capable of are not high enough.

Since the last inspection, governors have undertaken a review of governance and, as a result, they have a more accurate view of the school. They challenge the progress of groups of pupils who are underachieving. However, they are only just becoming aware of the need to offer challenge to the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils, who presently make good progress but are capable of more. Governors have taken positive steps to improve their role in the school's development.

Parents are very positive about the school. They comment favourably on your strong but calm leadership and appreciate the hard work of all of the staff in school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The checks made upon the recruitment of staff are exemplary. Other safeguarding records are organised, comprehensive and held securely.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is one of vigilance. Staff are aware of the school's processes for dealing with safeguarding issues. The designated lead for child protection and wider safeguarding team are tenacious in their efforts to make sure pupils' needs are met. Staff receive regular updates and training on safeguarding.

Pupils feel safe at school. According to pupils, this is because of frequent fire drills, site security and supportive adults. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and their awareness of how to keep safe online is extensive. All parents responding to the online survey, Parent View, agreed that their child is happy and safe at school.

Inspection findings

- The school has maintained the strengths that were evident at last inspection. Leaders and staff have grasped the opportunity to embrace a new curriculum and assessment arrangements. There are emerging signs of greater progress in pupils' writing, partly due to opportunities for them to practise their skills in a range of other subjects, for example Year 6 pupils' first person recounting of 'a journey of a blood cell' in science.
- Learning within the school is good. This was evident in pupils' books, in lessons and in the results they achieve.
- In mathematics lessons there are missed opportunities to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding. This fits the inspection evidence and the outcomes achieved by the pupils at the end of key stage 2. Many of the pupils I spoke to felt that they would like to see more challenge in their work.
- The pupils who read to me were extremely fluent for their age and had a very good understanding of what they had read. Pupils read for enjoyment and commented upon the range of books available for them to read in the school library.
- The use of the pupil premium funding has been focused well on supporting pupils to achieve the expected standard for their age. However, it is not used to fully challenge

and stretch the thinking of the most able disadvantaged pupils within lessons. The pupil premium strategy has been successful in achieving its aims. However, the broad outcomes detailed in the pupil premium strategy do not provide actions that are specific enough. This means that governors cannot fully evaluate the impact of this funding.

- Governors are proactive in setting the vision for the school. They bring passion and a range of expertise to school leadership. They meet with staff to discuss the progress of pupils in different subjects and question any underperformance in pupils' achievement.
- Behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils play together at playtimes and enter their classrooms ready to learn. They are articulate and thoughtful. In the Reception class they pick up routines very quickly. The behaviour policy is known to all in the school and it is applied consistently. Pupils are active in setting the rules at the start of the school year and are aware of the sanctions imposed for breaking these. Pupils believe that bullying does not occur at the school. This is because staff act swiftly to ensure that poor behaviour is dealt with. Pupils are proud to be part of their school and fully appreciate the work of the staff in preparing them for the future.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment information is used by leaders to set higher expectations of the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils throughout the school
- there is greater challenge within mathematics and English lessons to stretch the thinking of the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils
- action plans link actions more closely with outcomes so governors can review and question these with more clarity.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Manchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bolton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- The lead inspector observed teaching in each class. This included shorter visits made jointly with the headteacher.
- The lead inspector looked through a range of pupils' work across the curriculum and heard pupils read.
- The lead inspector made observations of pupils' behaviour at lunchtime, when pupils were moving in and around the school and during lessons. He spoke to pupils formally in groups and informally around school and at playtime.
- Meetings were held with staff, governors, senior leaders and a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector considered a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and its areas for development. He looked at attendance and behaviour records, including records of bullying incidents.
- The lead inspector took into account the views of 47 parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The lead inspector reviewed safeguarding documentation and how this related to daily practice as well as speaking with staff and children about safeguarding.