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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Holly Shann
Headteacher
Long Lane Church of England Primary School
Long Lane
Dalbury Lees
Ashbourne
Derbyshire
DE6 5BJ

Dear Mrs Shann

Short inspection of Long Lane Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 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 December 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment in September 2016, you have ensured that the school has robust and rigorous procedures in place. For example, you have introduced a comprehensive assessment system that enables teachers to monitor the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics every half term. Pupil progress meetings are now held every half term. These ensure that any pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified and given the additional help they need in order to catch up.

You have also arranged for pupils' work to be moderated with other schools. This helps to ensure that the judgements teachers are making regarding pupils' attainment and progress are accurate.

Your school improvement planning and self-evaluation are detailed and accurate. You have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done next in order that it continues to improve. For example, you told me that subject leadership in the foundation subjects is an upcoming priority for development.

You have a robust system of performance management in place for teachers. Targets are linked clearly to the school improvement plan and to pupil progress.

Governors make good use of the local authority adviser to ensure that your performance management objectives are challenging and appropriate. You have created an 'open culture' within the school which is particularly appreciated by governors. They told me that they receive detailed and relevant information from you about the school, which in turn allows them to hold staff members accountable for the progress of pupils.

You have made sure that teaching assistants are deployed suitably. They work closely with the class teacher to deepen the knowledge and understanding of all pupils. This is especially necessary considering the wide range of ages and abilities in both classes.

The school is a warm and friendly place where staff know pupils and their families extremely well. One pupil told me that 'It feels like one big happy family.' The classrooms are bright and stimulating, celebrating a wide range of curriculum subjects, including history, geography, science and art. Pupils look smart in their school uniform. They are extremely polite and behave well, both inside the classroom and when playing outside at breaktime and lunchtime.

Pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills in a wide range of sports, including hockey, football, athletics, fencing, dance and archery. The schools' sports partnership offers the opportunity for pupils to compete against other schools in competitions. Pupils told me they enjoy these experiences.

Pupils overwhelmingly told me they enjoy school and they feel safe. One remarked, 'everyone here is really kind'. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe online and when crossing the road. They enjoyed recent whole-school visits to Chester Zoo and Magna, where they deepened their knowledge and understanding of science.

Similarly, parents were equally enthusiastic about the school and its work. One parent told me the school is 'absolutely fantastic' and another commented, 'I couldn't have asked for a better start to my child's education.' They value the good communication offered by you and the staff and say that any issues are dealt with swiftly.

In 2016, the proportions of pupils who achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics, and at a greater depth, in the end of key stage tests were above national figures. The proportion of pupils who passed the phonics check in Year 1 has consistently been lower than the national average. However, you have quickly established the reasons for this, and have already begun to successfully address the issue. Standards in the early years have risen. The proportions of pupils achieving a good level of development in 2015 and 2016 were above those seen for other schools nationally.

Current assessment information provided by you, and work seen in books, indicate that the majority of pupils in all year groups are on track to achieve age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the current

academic year. You agree that pupils do not currently have enough opportunities to practise spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in extended writing. Consequently, teachers are not clear as to whether these skills have become embedded into pupils' writing.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to ensure that pupils are suitably challenged and that progress in lessons is good. Pupils told me that their work was often challenging and that they received help quickly from adults should they require it. Work in books shows that pupils are making good progress over time. This is particularly the case for writing in the key stage 1 class.

Another area for improvement identified at the last inspection was giving pupils the opportunity to reflect on their achievements. Teachers are now consistently using the school's new marking and feedback policy to allow pupils time to make improvements to their work and think carefully as to how it could be improved.

You have worked hard to improve the attendance rates at the school. However, there are a number of disadvantaged pupils who have absence and persistent absence rates that are above the national figures.

Safeguarding is effective.

The checks you make on adults before they are allowed to work or volunteer at the school are rigorous. The single central record is up to date and meets all statutory requirements. You have ensured that staff and governors have received relevant safeguarding training, including in safer recruitment and how to fulfil the 'Prevent' duty. Staff are therefore alert to the dangers of pupils being exposed to extremist views. Staff have relevant first aid certificates, including paediatric first aid.

You have introduced a good system for staff to record any welfare concerns they may have regarding a pupil. These records are of a good quality and are kept securely. You are aware of the importance of making timely referrals to other agencies, therefore ensuring that any pupils or families who require extra support receive it quickly.

Records kept by the school show that incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare and there have been no racist or homophobic incidents during this academic year.

Inspection findings

- The teaching of phonics is effective. Staff use a variety of strategies to engage and encourage pupils to learn the sounds that letters make. For example, the reception children were learning 'oo' and 'oi' effectively and older pupils were writing sentences to develop their knowledge of 'where' and 'there'. Pupils who read to me used phonics knowledge well to decode any unfamiliar words. Pupils read regularly at home and told me they enjoy it. Their reading books were at an appropriate level of challenge.

- Pupils in the mixed-age classes are catered for effectively. For example, in a key stage 2 mathematics lesson, one group of pupils was successfully counting in multiples of 5, another group was calculating the area of different shapes, and older pupils were multiplying decimals. In each instance, the level of challenge was appropriate and the pupils were making good progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. You have recently introduced procedures for the identification and monitoring of those pupils who require extra help. There are also strong links with outside agencies, for example the autism team and speech and language therapy. Consequently, those pupils who require extra support receive it quickly.
- You have received good support from the local authority adviser who has helped to confirm your judgements on the quality of teaching and pupils' standards in English and mathematics.
- Governors are supportive of the school and clearly want the best for its pupils. They have undergone relevant training in order to better support your school improvement work. Governors understand the importance of making regular visits to school, so that they can see for themselves how well it is performing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- start to develop and support the work of the foundation subject leaders so that they are fully equipped to drive up standards in these subjects
- give increased opportunities for pupils to practise spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in extended writing
- continue to work with families and pupils to ensure that attendance and persistent absence rates are better than national averages.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Stonier
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, and a representative from the local authority. I visited both classes with you and examined a range of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils informally during lessons, at lunch and formally during an interview. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at the start of the school day and during lessons. I met with parents at the beginning of the school day and I took into account 14 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 15 responses to the Ofsted free-text service. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, the single central record, the latest achievement information for the school, the school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plan, records of meetings of the governing body and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.