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Mrs Sally Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Burnley Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your senior leaders were all appointed after the inspection and you brought a sense of purpose and direction. You introduced accountability at every opportunity, which has led to an increase in staff's motivation and morale to always seek the best for pupils. Priorities are clear for all to see and effective procedures support conscientious and regular self-evaluation. You and senior leaders have a good understanding of how to drive improvement.

The Christian ethos of the school is strikingly evident in that you seek to serve the local community, be they of the Christian faith, other faiths or none. All are welcome in this school. Discrimination and discord are taboo. A number of parents were very keen to tell me of the extent that you and your staff go to so as to support the most vulnerable and give them the best start in their education. From starting points well below those typical for their age, pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Since the last inspection, you set to work on addressing the areas needing improvement. Pupils' writing skills have developed considerably. The standard of their writing is much better than other pupils nationally. This is because you went right back to basics and analysed exactly what was that prevented pupils from being competent in their writing. You then put into place very specific strategies that were embedded across the whole school. While you have secured rapid improvements in writing, the achievement of pupils in reading and mathematics has

not been as impressive.

In mathematics, you ensured that problem-solving was introduced into teaching and that pupils would be given opportunities to use their reasoning skills. I could see evidence of this in pupils' book and through your own records. However, it is noticeable that pupils' basic mathematical skills are not always secure, and this is impeding the progress that pupils are making in this subject. Likewise in reading. Because opportunities for pupils to read at home and more widely are limited, pupils' vocabulary is not as developed. You have spent a considerable amount of money resourcing the school library and purchasing a range of reading books and pupils are using these well. However, too few pupils read outside of school. We spoke about ways in which parental engagement could be further enhanced to support and promote their children's reading for pleasure.

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and information about pupils' learning is used in a more intelligent way. Teachers build on pupils' prior knowledge to plan lessons that meet their needs and engage their interests. The pupils spoke to me about how well their teachers make learning fun and simple to understand. At the same time, they recognised that they are made to think at school and that they often go home with 'heads that hurt a little. Not in a bad way just that we've learned so much.' You have very high aspirations for the pupils, but you know that in order to realise these aspirations the teachers need to be suitably equipped with the skills to deliver. An extensive programme of training has been put in place and where staff need support it is provided for. In developing staff, you are astute in identifying future leaders and have worked hard to develop leadership skills so as to ensure effective succession planning for the future.

Governors share the ambition and diligence of senior leaders to improve continually. They are very self-aware and readily acknowledge how much they have grown in confidence and expertise since you became headteacher. Comprehensive training has given governors the skills necessary to understand assessment information, which helps them understand how well the school is doing. This enables governors to support leaders while holding them firmly to account. Effective performance management arrangements, regular visits, links to different subject areas and purposeful questioning all contribute to making governors efficient in carrying out their duties.

Safeguarding is effective.

All of the pupils and parents I spoke to, and those who responded to the online questionnaire, say that this is a safe school. All the safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect requirements. The procedures to check the suitability of adults working with children are thorough and you leave nothing to chance. There are clear systems in place to record incidents effectively; records are detailed and of high quality. You work closely with external agencies and parental involvement is appropriate. Staff training is up to date and adults know what to do if there are any concerns about a pupil. Pupils know whom to speak to if they have any concerns or worries and show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- Achievement in all subjects indicates a sustained picture of improvement. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years is closer to the national average each year. From starting points well below typical for their age, children in the early years make good progress. A similar picture is seen in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Over the past three years there has been sustained improvement.
- The standards reached by pupils at the end of key stage 1 have been variable. There has been turbulence in staffing in this key stage and this has had an impact upon standards. Nonetheless, you ably and sensitively managed this period and there is now stable staffing. Key stage 1 is beginning to return to being a strength of the school.
- Pupils' achievement in writing by the end of key stage 2 is excellent. While pupils achieve similarly to their peers nationally in reading and mathematics, this is not as strong as in writing. As outlined above, we spoke about this in depth. You are working with the local authority and diocese to see where you can benefit from effective practice in other schools.
- The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions have been high in previous years. This is because of the very high standards and expectations of behaviour that you have. You and your staff do all you can to support pupils with challenging behaviour but you take a firm line when certain behaviours are no longer tolerable. The numbers of exclusions are reducing but you only resort to exclusion as a last resort. The pupils told me that behaviour is very good in class and they enjoy coming to school. This can be seen in their high rates of attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are more opportunities for pupils to read and acquire a wider vocabulary
- pupils' basic mathematical skills are consolidated.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you and your assistant headteacher, members of the governing body and I was able to meet with a representative from the local authority and diocese. With you, I conducted a learning walk and visited all classes and had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I also listened to a number of pupils read. I met with a group of pupils during the day, spoke with a number of parents at the school gates and took account of 16 free-text comments and one submitted letter. There were 17 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. There were 24 responses to the online staff questionnaire and no responses to the pupils' questionnaire. You provided me with recently undertaken parental and staff surveys, which I took into account. I scrutinised your assessment information, school improvement planning, behaviour records, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.