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12 October 2017

Mrs T Westwell
Acting Headteacher
Oswaldtwistle Hippings Methodist Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Heron Way
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Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Westwell

Short inspection of Oswaldtwistle Hippings Methodist Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 September 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 2012.

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 the acting deputy headteacher are working well as a team and have correctly identified clear next steps, including developing the most able pupils' reasoning skills and improving the effectiveness of middle leaders. Governors are a strength of the school. Supported well by the local authority, they have managed the change in leadership effectively and provide strong strategic direction.

Leaders have built on the close links with parents. As a result, parents are supportive and are proud of the positive reputation the school has. They believe that communication is a strength of the school. Pupils are also proud of their school. Their behaviour and conduct is exemplary. They recognise the hard work of you and your staff. One pupil stated, 'Mrs Westwell tries to think of as many ways as she can to improve the school.'

Christian values are at the heart of the school and permeate through every aspect of its life. You promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully and give them a strong understanding of fundamental British values. This is provided through a well-designed curriculum that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.

At your last inspection, an area for improvement was to improve the quality of

teaching and learning. Staff are benefiting from the sharing of good practice, which is particularly helpful for those new to teaching. Teachers have high expectations and challenge pupils, which has resulted in better outcomes across a range of subjects. However, you agreed that even more could be done to improve outcomes for the most able pupils in mathematics. They have limited opportunities to develop their reasoning skills when solving problems.

You were also asked to improve the focus of leaders' plans for school improvement. While you have ensured the improvement plan is now more focused, middle leaders who are new to their roles have not had the opportunity to refine subject-specific plans yet. We agreed this is an area for the school to improve on.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safeguarding culture in the school is strong. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There are also regular checks of these systems by senior staff. You use an electronic system to record all safeguarding concerns thoroughly and respond appropriately, reporting concerns to external services as necessary. Staff have received appropriate training and have a secure knowledge of how to recognise signs of different types of abuse, such as neglect. Appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken frequently and is up to date, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. Your efforts regarding the care and support of vulnerable pupils are commendable.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe because their teachers regularly provide them with the relevant information. Pupils that I spoke to during the inspection say that they know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure.

Inspection findings

- We agreed a number of key issues that this inspection would focus on. The first of these was to see how effectively tasks match pupils' abilities and challenge the middle-ability pupils in reading and mathematics. You have taken decisive action in this area. You and your staff have instilled a love of learning in pupils. Learning, including homework, is now matched closely to the needs of pupils. New strategies within guided-reading sessions, focusing on inference and deduction skills, have a positive impact on developing reading skills. Teachers and teaching assistants make better use of assessment and this has developed consistent teaching in all subjects. Teachers' questioning is also providing more opportunities for middle-ability pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across the wider curriculum.
- In mathematics, you have improved pupils' access to apparatus in the classroom and provided staff with training in effective use of resources. As a result, there has been an improvement in middle-ability pupils' outcomes across year groups. There is also greater quality and consistency in teaching pupils how to solve problems. The school's own assessment information and work in books shows that progress for these pupils is improving across the curriculum. However, the impact on the

most able pupils is not as secure, as they are not provided with as much challenge as they could be to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics.

- Another key issue we agreed to look at was the attendance of pupils entitled to free school meals. The number of persistent absences for this group of pupils was high in 2016. You now have good-quality systems in place for monitoring attendance and there has been a drive to improve punctuality and attendance for disadvantaged pupils. You know families well and work closely with them to provide the support that they need. Leaders are aware of the need to respond to the changing demographics of the school.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased. You work closely with external agencies to support the most vulnerable families. You are now raising expectations about attendance and, as a result, pupils whose attendance is improving are now making stronger progress.
- We also agreed to look at the improvements made in writing since the last inspection. Writing attainment at key stage 2 dropped slightly in 2017. The new subject leader for English has already taken decisive steps to improve this situation. She has modelled effective teaching for other staff which has enabled them to improve their own practice. The leader checks that teachers embed the principles of the English curriculum and increase the opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of subjects. There are clear improvements in the way pupils' work is assessed so that teaching is more closely matched to the abilities of pupils.
- As a result of these changes, the proportion of pupils who achieve the standards expected for their age in writing has increased across the school. This was clearly observed in your own assessment information and the progress I observed in pupils' books.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop middle leadership so that there is further improvement in pupil outcomes
- teachers continue to challenge the most able pupils, especially in developing their reasoning skills in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Throughout the inspection I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I met with you, the acting deputy headteacher and the English leader to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I looked at learning in pupils' books. I spoke to the school's local authority improvement partner.

I reviewed documentation which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day, considered 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 21 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 11 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I visited classes, along with you, to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.