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Mrs Caroline Ireland and Mrs Paula Glynn
Joint Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Ireland and Mrs Glynn

Short inspection of St Thomas' Leesfield CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 December 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 January 2013.

Since the previous inspection leadership of the school has changed from one full-time headteacher to two part-time headteachers.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. It is clear that leaders are developing a school which values the contribution of each individual member of staff. Competent leadership has ensured a smooth transfer to two part-time headteachers. You both show good communication, skill and a determination to succeed. Staff and governors benefit from the extra insight and support that you bring. Senior leaders invest much of their time and attention getting to know the school in detail, as well as supporting other leaders and staff. They use this information to address the correct priorities and ensure that staff keep up to date. As a result, teaching is successful and pupils make good progress.

The Christian faith is integral to the ethos of the school. Pupils learn about the beliefs and celebrations of Christianity and about other faiths and religions. They learn the importance of fundraising for charities and the importance of caring for the environment. They respect the views and rights of others.

Leaders and staff recognise and reward pupils' efforts as much as their achievement. Displays in corridors, classrooms and even the headteachers' office, celebrate pupils' good work.

Pupils represent their school with pride, such as when they participate in a range of local singing events. They deepen their skills through wider experiences, for example when taking the role of engineering apprentices. They benefit from a range of after-school clubs such as the 'garden gang', where they learn to look after a local allotment and identify the birdlife.

Leaders and staff consult with pupils and parents regularly for their views about how to improve the school. Communication with families is clear and frequent. Leaders use the school website and social media successfully to provide information for pupils and their families.

When inspectors last visited the school in 2013, they asked leaders to make sure pupils know their targets. This has been achieved. Staff give pupils clear explanations of what they are to learn. Pupils know what to do if they find work difficult or easy. They understand what steps will help them to achieve highly and how their targets link to different subjects.

At the previous inspection, inspectors noted that staff missed opportunities to use information and communication technology when teaching pupils. This is no longer the case. Staff now use a range of technology to enhance learning activities.

A further recommendation at the previous inspection was to improve staff's use of the outdoors for teaching children in Reception. During my visit, I observed that this aspect of the school's work is now a strength. Staff support children's thinking and imaginative skills expertly, such as when children play sailing the Titanic ship across the ocean.

Leaders are introducing a range of important actions to improve pupils' reading skills. Even so, you agree there is more work to do to address weaknesses in the teaching of this subject, including phonics. The teaching of mathematics and pupils' achievement are improving strongly because of good leadership.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders make sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet the needs of pupils and their families. They are vigilant and proactive in checking that the school premises are secure. They double-check that pupils feel safe. Leaders' communication with families is frequent, open and honest. Staff make prompt telephone calls to parents if pupils are absent from school on any given day.

The two headteachers and the learning mentor share the leadership of safeguarding very successfully. They keep a precise check on the needs of pupils and families. Leaders make full use of expertise from outside of the school to deliver training for staff and governors. Leaders are unafraid to challenge themselves, staff or other agencies about arrangements for the care and protection of pupils. Governors check the work of the school to safeguard pupils thoroughly.

Leaders share information carefully with staff about pupils' well-being. Staff give pupils many opportunities to learn about being safe, for example in how they use the internet. Staff respond positively to pupils' concerns about their lives.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' prompt and thorough work to improve mathematics is a strength of the school. Leaders have good oversight of pupils' learning in mathematics. They use their detailed subject knowledge to help staff improve their teaching. Leaders make thoughtful use of national materials to develop the curriculum. Mathematics lessons are exciting. Teachers plan activities meticulously to meet the abilities of different pupils. Teachers focus rightly on making sure pupils can approach similar mathematical problems in widely differing ways. Pupils explain their thinking to others. Staff give pupils high-quality challenges in activities. Many pupils enjoy mathematics. Pupils' work and school information show that their achievement in mathematics is strong. Parents say that pupils who are less keen on this subject continue to succeed because of the teaching skills of staff.
- Leaders, staff and governors are focusing currently on improving the teaching of reading. This is because some key stage 1 pupils did not attain as well as they should in reading in past years. Leaders set challenging targets for staff to improve their individual skills in teaching pupils to read. Parents are very positive about their children's progress in reading. They welcome the challenge of their children's reading homework and the frequency with which staff change pupils' books. Leaders know the achievement of individual pupils in detail and use this information prudently when reviewing the work of the school. The proportion of current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, making good progress in their reading abilities in Year 1 and Year 2 is increasing. Even so, leaders' plans to improve reading are imprecise. During the inspection, you agreed with me that staff sometimes miss opportunities to correct pupils' mistaken use of letter sounds. You also agreed that some staff do not always model speech and letter sounds accurately.
- The work of staff in the early years to provide for children's learning outdoors is successful. Staff support children's learning skilfully, including to develop their writing and imaginative play. They aid children's learning through precise questions and supportive language. Children enjoy a wide range of interesting activities and resources for learning. Bad weather is not a barrier to children's learning because leaders make sure staff and children dress suitably. Leaders in the early years are clear that staff make full use of learning opportunities outdoors for children.
- Leaders ensure that teachers capture every opportunity to use information and communication technology in their teaching. To sustain this improvement, leaders and governors continue to increase the availability of hardware for use by staff and pupils.
- One of the most striking aspects of the school is that staff and leaders make sure pupils' learning across subjects is varied and worthwhile. Pupils learn to respect the skills and contributions of other people. For example, they celebrate Remembrance Day. They also learn about the needs of people who have

disabilities. Pupils understand the importance of effort and hard work in being successful. They know what this means for the lives of gold medal-winning Olympians. Learning is great fun; for example, pupils dressed as characters from Peter Pan stories for World Book Day.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all staff model speech and letter sounds accurately
- all staff correct errors in children's enunciation of sounds, so they learn from their mistakes
- leaders' plans to improve pupils' reading skills identify more precisely how teaching and learning are to be improved and how success will be assured.

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 Oldham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I visited a sample of classrooms to observe learning and look at pupils' work. I met with senior and middle leaders to discuss your reviews of the school's work and your plans for improvement. I met with five governors, including the chair. I met with a representative from the local authority. I reviewed school safeguarding procedures, including arrangements to keep pupils safe, safeguarding checks and record-keeping. I spoke to some parents as they brought their children to school at the start of the school day. I reviewed 33 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I considered information from a recent school survey of pupils.