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Mrs Janet Dunn
Headteacher
Appley Bridge All Saints Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Dunn

Short inspection of Appley Bridge All Saints Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The palpable caring ethos that is at the heart of your school enables pupils to thrive. You have created a community where pupils are nurtured and valued. You and the governing body ensure that the school is very much part of the wider local and church communities.

While recognising the importance of English and mathematics, you are very clear in your belief that the curriculum should be wide and varied. In this way, you ensure that the curriculum at your school provides a genuinely enriching experience for all pupils. For example, you make the most of the outdoor environment and your local surroundings to provide meaningful learning in subjects such as history and geography.

Able supported by the deputy headteacher, you have moved the school forward since its last inspection. Your collaborative approach to professional development has enabled teachers to hone their classroom practice. As a result, all pupils benefit from routinely strong teaching. Alongside the deputy headteacher and governors, you are very aware of teachers' workload when introducing new systems and initiatives. You are very clear about only asking your staff to do things that will make a positive difference to your pupils. Staff value this considerate approach. All those who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire feel very well supported by

leaders.

Pupils are very positive about their school, particularly its friendly and caring ethos. They value the support and encouragement that they receive from their teachers. They relish their learning, particularly in mathematics. However, some pupils feel that, on occasions, the work that teachers give them in this subject is too easy, and they would welcome more challenge. This view is shared by a small number of parents. Challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. You have taken action to address this but agree that it is not yet happening routinely in all classes.

Parents are generally very positive about the school. Many of those who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire spoke of how happy their children are. They commented on how much their children enjoy coming to school. They particularly value the school's welcoming ethos and its 'real family feel'.

At the last inspection, you were asked to develop middle leaders so that their work has a clear impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. You responded swiftly and effectively. Middle leaders are now a strength of the school. You have empowered them to be effective leaders of their respective subject areas. They now speak of a 'sense of pride' and 'ownership' of their subject.

You and the governing body are rightly proud of the standards that pupils reach by the end of Year 6. In 2017, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than the national average at both the expected and the higher standard. However, you are aware that, behind these strong attainment figures, some pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. This September, you introduced a new system to enable teachers to track pupils' progress more effectively. You acknowledge that this system is not yet embedded but there is evidence that it is helping teachers to provide the right level of challenge and support for individual pupils to accelerate their progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that a strong culture of safeguarding is at the heart of the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children in the school are secure.

It is evident that you and your staff know your pupils extremely well. This, coupled with the training that staff receive, means that you are all well placed to spot any signs or symptoms of potential risk or abuse.

Pupils learn about online safety as part of the computing and personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. As well as ensuring that your pupils know how to use the internet safely, you also offer workshops to parents on this topic.

Inspection findings

- In the last two years, pupils have made average progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment in these subjects has been above the national average. However, over the same period, disadvantaged pupils have not made good progress or attained well. Consequently, my main line of enquiry for this inspection was to find out what you are doing to ensure that the small number of disadvantaged pupils who attend your school make the best possible progress. There is no doubt that you know each of these individual pupils extremely well. You have identified any potential barriers to learning that they may encounter and you provide appropriate support. The new system that you have introduced this year to track pupils' progress is helping teachers to meet the learning needs of any disadvantaged pupils in their class more effectively. Evidence gathered from our joint scrutiny of disadvantaged pupils' work shows that when teachers provide this personalised support, it is helping the pupils to make good progress.
- We agreed that you and other leaders, including governors, need to ensure that this small number of disadvantaged pupils are a high priority for everyone in the school. There is no question about your commitment to supporting these pupils. However, you and governors acknowledge that you need to be sharper in the way that you evaluate the impact of your actions on the progress of individuals.
- Another line of enquiry for this inspection related to the teaching of mathematics, and particularly whether it enables the most able pupils to make the best possible progress. Improving pupils' progress in mathematics has been, and remains, your top priority. You have not taken a 'quick fix' approach to this but looked to create a sustained improvement to the way mathematics is taught across the school. The range of actions that you have taken include: appointing a new experienced subject leader; employing an external consultant to provide staff training; introducing competitions; having a mathematics-themed week; increasing the time spent each day on mathematics, and purchasing more varied and practical resources. These actions have raised the profile of mathematics across the school. Leaders' lesson observations and book scrutinies show that the quality of mathematics teaching throughout the school has improved. Consequently, in 2017, the overall progress and attainment of Year 6 pupils in mathematics were better than in 2016.
- Your focus on improving the quality of mathematics teaching across the school has had some impact on the most able pupils, but you acknowledge that this remains an area for further improvement. In 2017, more pupils achieved the higher standard in this subject than in the previous year, but some of the most able pupils did not make good enough progress. Pupils currently in key stage 2 say that they sometimes find the work too easy and that they would welcome more challenge. You acknowledge that until this year there has been insufficient challenge in the early stages of key stage 2 for those pupils who have attained highly in mathematics at the end of Year 2. You believe that the new tracking system means that teachers are now more sharply focused on pupils' prior attainment than they have been previously.
- My final line of enquiry related to the quality of middle leadership. My inspection findings show that there is now strong subject leadership throughout the school.

Highly effective subject leaders make a valuable contribution to the leadership of the school. You have empowered them to take ownership of their respective areas. They clearly relish the opportunity not just to raise achievement, but also to develop pupils' love of learning in their subjects. You have encouraged them to be outward looking in their approach. For example, some leaders have been successful in achieving externally accredited quality marks and attracting funding to raise the profile of their subjects in the school. This team of middle leaders encourages all staff to work collaboratively. They take great pride in their work and are successful in creating an enriching curriculum for pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers use the new tracking system effectively to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly that of the most able pupils in key stage 2 mathematics
- the support that they provide enables disadvantaged pupils to make the best possible progress.

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

Anne Seneviratne
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with a group of subject leaders and five members of the governing body, including the chair, and I had a meeting with a representative of the local authority. I met formally with two groups of pupils and talked informally with others in lessons and during morning breaktime. I listened to pupils read. I also talked with parents informally at the start of the school day. Accompanied by you, I observed teaching and learning across the school. Together with you and the deputy headteacher, I scrutinised the work of a small group of pupils. I examined your self-evaluation document. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View and responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text survey. I also considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.