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1 February 2018

Mr Andrew Embley-Peers
Colne Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Bent Lane
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Dear Mr Embley-Peers

Short inspection of Colne Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018, 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 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 school has been through some very challenging and upsetting times over the last two years. Leadership capacity was reduced due to unforeseen circumstances. However, a new senior leadership team, effectively led by you, is now in place and this has steadied the ship. You have a very clear vision about what you want to achieve and have worked with passion and resolve to ensure that the school continues to be good. You know the school and community extremely well and you are held in high regard by staff, parents and carers alike.

In 2017, you were rightly disappointed with results in reading at key stage 2. You and the acting deputy headteacher acted swiftly and decisively to address this decline. Your rapid and effective action led to improvements in reading. The school has sustained the strengths in teaching across all subjects and overall progress is good for all pupils, including those that are disadvantaged. Pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that all pupils are included. Extra support is given to those who need it and enrichment activities are provided for these pupils by the school.

Results in writing improved in 2017. However, you are aware that in some classes pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length and lack confidence to sustain their writing and improve their achievement.

Teaching is good. Staff have access to high-quality training and professional development and they have responded well to the drive to raise standards even further. Lessons are interesting and engaging. As a result of the good teaching, pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is high. Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are keen to show off their school and talk to visitors. They are proud of their school. They say that, generally, pupils get along very well together.

At the previous inspection inspectors asked the school to improve teaching. For example, by teachers raising their expectations of what pupils could achieve. You have worked hard to ensure that the work given to pupils matches their ability and addresses the challenges of the new national assessments. This is because the training that teachers get helps them to recognise what is needed for pupils to attain a higher level. In addition, you were also asked to improve the curriculum. The curriculum has been redesigned and offers rich and vibrant learning opportunities. There are increased opportunities for pupils to read and use mathematics across more subjects. In addition pupils are using computers more across the curriculum.

The vast majority of parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One typical comment was: 'The school is exceptional at making children proud of their achievements and at fostering a caring, safe environment for my child.'

Governors are highly supportive of the work of the school. Many are recently new to the role and they have used their various skills to pull together as a committed cohesive team. They are effective at holding leaders to account and very much value your realistic and honest evaluation of the school's position.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is effective. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have robust procedures in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. You are very knowledgeable about families and ensure that they are provided with appropriate support when necessary. The governing body take their safeguarding role very seriously, making sure that every member of staff is appropriately trained and aware of their duties to safeguard pupils.

Pupils say they feel safe. They understand that there is someone they can talk to if they have a problem and they are sure staff will help them. The design of the building gives leaders and governors some challenges regarding safeguarding. Nevertheless, you ensure that risk assessments are in place where necessary and procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed some key lines of enquiry. Firstly, we discussed the decline in reading progress over the last two years. You and your senior leadership team were acutely aware of this matter and you immediately

took decisive action to address the issue. Your actions and teachers' hard work is paying off. Adjustments made to the timetable allow reading skills to be taught regularly and effectively. Training has improved teachers' skills and they now give more attention to ensuring pupils that understand what they have read.

Evidence in pupils' books and from current assessments indicate that more pupils are reading at the higher level in reading. You have remodelled the school library and pupils say that they very much enjoy visiting it. There has been an effort to expose children to high-quality texts in order to raise the expectation of what pupils can achieve in reading. This has been successful; pupils are keen to talk about what they have read. Older pupils have noticed the focus on improving reading. One commented: 'I only used to read non-fiction, but now I love fiction too.' Another said: 'I think the books are usually better than the films.' A number of initiatives, such as reading ambassadors who encourage others to read and the 250-day reading challenge, which involves reading every day, have also been successful in raising the profile of reading across the school.

- We also discussed the effectiveness of the early years. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. Teaching is effective and children make good progress. The number of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception is slightly above the national average. Parents are very appreciative of the start that their children get and relationships between home and school are strong. However, you and the governing body are fully aware that, despite these strengths, the environment is extremely small, both indoors and outdoors, and that this sometimes restricts the range of activities on offer. Plans are in place to extend the space available and you have already earmarked some funding available to do this.
- Lastly, we looked at the progress of all pupils, but particularly the middle-ability pupils. You are aware that the results of tests show that middle-ability pupils are not consistently being challenged to achieve the higher levels. You have tackled this by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Success is evident in the school's records and inspection evidence. More pupils are now working at the higher level in each year group in reading and mathematics. However, the impact of change is less evident in writing. At times, work lacks challenge and pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length and reach the higher standard in every year group.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide even more challenging opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum
- the early years environment is remodelled to extend even further the opportunities offered to children.

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

Emma Jackson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and other members of staff, including the deputy headteacher and key stage 1 leader. I also met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I met with pupils in a meeting and talked to some in lessons.

I took account of responses to the online questionnaires for parents and staff. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation document and school improvement plan and looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe.