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Mrs Jacqueline Stillings
Headteacher
Farnworth Church of England Controlled Primary School
Pit Lane
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Dear Mrs Stillings

Short inspection of Farnworth Church of England Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 June 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 have developed a strong team of leaders who have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. Your high expectations are shared by staff, governors and pupils. You and your team have continued to improve opportunities for pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress across the school.

The school's Christian ethos and strong values underpin everything in the school. The school is a friendly and welcoming community. Pupils' work is celebrated in displays on walls and corridors across the school, building their motivation. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school, and this is shown by their above-average attendance. A typical comment from pupils is: 'Teachers listen to you and are helpful.' Pupils behave well during lessons, playtimes and when moving around school. The forest school next to the school's field enriches pupils' learning experiences. Pupils relish the wide variety of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits. They develop good leadership skills in various roles, for example as e-safety officers and school councillors. The quiet garden equipped with a fountain and picnic tables provides pupils with an area for reflection and meditation.

The vast majority of parents I spoke with were very positive about the school. As one parent commented, 'It's a lovely family school. All members of staff, including the headteacher, are very approachable. My child loves this school and has made fantastic progress.' Another parent commented, 'The school provides a nurturing

environment. Staff go the extra mile to ensure the needs of each child are met.' The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, feel that their children are well looked after and make good progress. They say that they would recommend the school to others.

As a local leader of education, you use your expertise to coach and support leaders in other schools. Your deputy headteacher is complementing your own style of leadership well. Staff morale is high. Staff are proud to work in the school and feel well supported. One teacher commented, 'We put the children first and want them to be happy.' Governors share your desire to improve the school further. They provide effective support and challenge for leaders. Governors are fully involved in the school and know the school well. One commented, 'We want the children to develop a life-long love of learning.' You welcome the support and challenge from your local authority adviser.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked you to ensure that that pupils made faster progress in writing and mathematics. As a result of a whole-school focus on writing and mathematics, there has been strong improvement in pupils' attainment and progress. However, you are aware that more pupils need to achieve greater depth in their writing. You also acknowledge the need to improve the standards that pupils reach in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 by building on their problem-solving and reasoning skills. You have worked with teachers to ensure that they plan learning in such a way that all pupils are challenged well, including the most able pupils. You have made sure that improvement plans contain relevant success criteria so that the school can measure how well it is doing from term-to-term as it works towards its targets.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's records are carefully maintained and detailed. The culture of safeguarding is strong. Appropriate checks are made on staff before they start employment. Staff have received and read the latest guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016), and demonstrate a strong awareness of safeguarding issues. Staff receive up-to-date training on safeguarding matters so they know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils are supported and safe.

All the pupils who spoke to me said that they feel safe. Pupils told me that incidents of bullying were rare, but that teachers would manage these effectively if they did occur. Pupils know who to go to should they have any concerns, and they trust staff to resolve them. The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, felt that their children were safe.

Inspection findings

- My main line of enquiry for this inspection related to the pupils' progress in writing and mathematics. This had been an area for improvement since the previous inspection. Leaders have introduced a range of initiatives which have strengthened pupils' progress. Teachers in the school and across the local authority check to make sure that teachers' assessments are accurate. Pupils apply their knowledge of grammar and punctuation effectively in extended pieces of writing. Pupils are increasingly able to review and edit their written work, as well as following their teachers' advice about how to develop their writing. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are making good progress in writing. However, you acknowledge that more pupils need to achieve greater depth in writing.
- You have provided teachers with the support and training that they need to improve teaching in mathematics. Teachers use well-targeted questions to encourage pupils to show how they have found their answers. Leaders are working with teachers to improve pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. A review of current assessment information and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that progress in mathematics is improving. However, you acknowledge that this remains an area for further development in key stage 2.
- You rightly identified that pupils did not make rapid enough progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. You introduced a range of effective strategies to improve pupils' progress. For example, a focus on improving inference and deduction skills is providing pupils with the tools to improve their understanding of texts when reading. Visits from authors and workshops to help parents support their children are having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to reading. Provisional results at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 and the school's current assessment information show that attainment and progress have improved.
- You were concerned that some pupils had not reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2017. Training has been used to good effect to improve the teaching and assessment of phonics. Pupils who read to me used their phonics skills well to sound and blend unknown words. Leaders are ensuring that interventions are in place to make sure that pupils are well prepared and successful in the use of phonics by the end of Year 1.
- A very small minority of parents raised some concerns about the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders track their progress very carefully. They make good use of a wide range of external expertise. For example, speech and language therapists enhance the provision that the school provides. Highly trained school staff support the teaching and the progress which these pupils make. Inspection evidence indicates that the small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. However, in key stage 2, pupils are not always making enough progress from their starting points in writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils achieve greater depth of understanding in writing
- progress in mathematics in key stage 2 improves further, by building on pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills
- they continue to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they are able to make stronger progress from their individual starting points in writing in key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of senior and middle leaders. I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority and held a telephone conversation with another representative from the local authority.

I met formally with pupils and also spoke with other pupils during breaktime and lunchtime. I visited a number of classes where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I listened to pupils read. I scrutinised pupils' work across the school. I took account of 163 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 152 free-text responses. Parents' views were also gathered through discussions at the start of the day and during the inspection. I considered the views of eight staff through Ofsted's online questionnaire. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies about keeping children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.