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Mrs Jillian Holmes
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Holmes

Short inspection of Penwortham, St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been a number of changes to leadership and governance, including your promotion from deputy headteacher to headteacher and the appointment of another key stage leader to become deputy headteacher. In addition, the governing body has a new chair. These changes have allowed you to continue the school's effective work, building on its established successes, while also introducing new ideas and developing existing approaches. You have changed the organisation of classes to include an additional mixed-age class in key stage 2. This approach has been necessary to ensure that you are able to match the number of pupils in each year group to the available resources. Since the previous inspection, the teaching area for children in Reception and some pupils in year 1 has been redesigned to allow easy access between the two classrooms concerned. The number of pupils who have more complex special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has increased.

The school has a clear faith-based ethos which lies at the heart of all its work. The school's motto, 'Christ be in our heads, in our hearts and in our hands', is clearly displayed around the school. This motto is seen in action in the work of staff and pupils. Pupils are valued by staff and each other. The academic expectations of the school reflect the staff team's conviction that pupils deserve to receive the highest-quality teaching and learning. Staff are positive and work together for the benefit of pupils. Pupils are well looked after and, as a result, confidently say that they learn a lot, feel safe and are happy.

The school's self-evaluation document is detailed and honest. It has allowed you to identify the most important priorities for the further development of the school and so links effectively with the school improvement plan. This plan provides staff, governors and others with practical actions to ensure that the school gets even better. You have identified the importance of speeding up the learning of children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 to make sure that they gain as much as possible in those years and further up the school.

At the previous inspection, staff were asked to improve aspects of teaching so that pupils' achievement in writing increased and the most able did even better in mathematics. Leaders have ensured that staff have received training to improve their knowledge and confidence in teaching both writing and mathematics. When needed, you have worked with external consultants to do this. You have introduced new schemes of work, for example in spelling and mathematics. The success of these approaches is shown, for example, by pupils' rich mathematics learning, including many challenging word-based and reasoning problems. In addition, teachers' accurate assessment of writing was confirmed when samples of Year 6 writing were externally checked as part of the national curriculum assessments in 2017. Your analysis of pupils' progress has shown you that there are still differences between the quality of boys' and girls' writing in some years. You have already made this a priority for action over this school year. You judge that writing is further improving.

The parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were generally very positive about the school. Sometimes, they had different views about the same aspect of the school's work. For example, some parents felt that homework was too hard, while others said that it gave additional challenge to their children. A few parents commented on the school's increased use of mixed-age classes. Leaders and governors have judged that this arrangement is necessary. They ensure that there is a fair system for allocating pupils to classes and closely monitor pupils. This helps staff to support pupils in learning well, whatever class they are in.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the arrangements to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose. The safeguarding policy is clear and provides a helpful framework for staff and others to understand their responsibilities. It is openly available on the school's website. You arrange regular training about safeguarding for staff and governors and, through regular updates, further develop the staff's confidence in protecting pupils. If there are any situations when you need additional advice to make sure that you are protecting pupils from possible harm, you are willing to ask for this and to act on the advice given. You reflect on the actions you have taken to ensure that you, and staff more widely, provide the best possible protection for pupils.

Pupils are taught about how to stay as safe as possible when using the internet. This work is supported by Year 6 'digital leaders'. As well as giving information to

other pupils, the 'digital leaders' are preparing a presentation for parents about the risks of modern technology.

The school site is secure. Appropriate signage is used by school staff to ensure that the narrow road outside the school is kept free from parked cars.

Inspection findings

- Leadership in the school is effective. Your work, supported by other leaders and the wider staff team, is successfully ensuring that pupils' learning improves. You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the things which can be improved further. Governors are well informed and challenge senior and middle leaders well. They are also aware of the hard work of staff and so balance this challenge with support and encouragement. The significant changes to senior leadership have not dented staff confidence or morale.
- The published information about pupils' achievement shows that those in key stage 2 do well compared to national averages. While pupils' learning builds over the early years and key stage 1, their attainment here is lower. You have identified that some pupils are less independent than others as they move into key stage 1, and this slows their progress. You have started to address this issue, for example by ensuring that teachers of different year groups are clearer about end-of-key-stage assessment. Two years ago, while it remained around the national average, there was a marked drop in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the early years. You carefully considered this situation and determined that it was linked to how the standards children reached were assessed and an increase in the number of children who have SEN and/or disabilities. Staff are now more rigorous in completing and checking their assessments in the early years. Pupils across the school who have additional needs are effectively supported.
- Teachers' expectations are high. They work closely together to check that pupils are meeting these. For example, teams of teachers working in the same key stages plan together and review lessons to check that pupils are learning as well as possible. Your monitoring has identified differences in the standards of writing of boys and girls in different year groups. Therefore, you have ensured that teachers' reviews of work have included a focus on boys' writing. Over time the teaching of writing has improved. The approaches staff developed during the training provided after the previous inspection are now embedded in the work of the school. For example, I saw pupils in different classes extending their writing in religious education. They paid close attention to their vocabulary and grammar, while also setting out their knowledge and views about Holy Week.
- Mathematics teaching in the school is a particular strength. Pupils enjoy tackling the challenging problems set and, in doing so, develop their mathematical understanding. The new curriculum in mathematics, recently adopted by the school, means that teachers require pupils of all abilities, including the most able, to extend their thinking and so learn more quickly.
- The attendance of pupils is higher than in many other schools. Persistent absence fell from its low level even more in 2017. This reflects pupils' keenness not to

miss school, the school's careful monitoring and the fact that it continues to challenge and support families if a pupil's attendance is worse than that of others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching and learning for children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 enable them to make the fastest possible progress, including over the transition from the early years to key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness. I had discussions with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school, during lessons and at breaktime. I toured the school with you and visited the early years accompanied by the deputy headteacher, who is also the early years leader. I observed teaching and learning in classes across the school and heard a small group of pupils read. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' books and discussed others with you. I examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of pupils, the school's self-evaluation document and the improvement plan. I considered 66 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 48 additional written responses. I spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. I reviewed 17 responses from members of staff to their online questionnaires.