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Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Southern

### **Short inspection of Kirkland and Catterall St Helen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 October 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. With the support of the governing body, you and your deputy headteacher ensure that pupils benefit from a high-quality education. This is because of your extremely reflective approach. Since the last inspection, you and your staff have continued to strive to be the 'best that you can be'. This was epitomised by a comment made by a pupil who explained to me that: 'This school keeps improving because teachers are always looking for ways to make it better.'

You are committed to ensuring that strong moral values permeate every aspect of school life. As a result, pupils and staff liken the school community to 'a happy family' where they feel well supported. Pupils are keen to explain how they have raised money for local charities. The majority of parents are positive about the quality of education that the school provides. They feel that their children make good progress within a 'nurturing and positive' environment. Parents explained to me that they feel able to raise any concerns with staff who they consider to be approachable.

You have inspired the staff. They are extremely supportive of you and your deputy headteacher. This is because you have created a culture where they feel confident to develop their teaching further by trying new approaches. Staff share your ambition for excellence and they are keen to learn from their colleagues. You have

created plenty of opportunities for them to share examples of good practice, both across the school and also with staff at other schools. This means that the quality of teaching is going from strength to strength.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school, as well as those aspects that require further development. They are extremely knowledgeable and they bring expertise to their roles from a wide range of sectors. This ensures that they ask pertinent questions of leaders. As a result, governors have played a key role in the ongoing improvements following the last inspection. For example, they have challenged leaders to ensure that improvements in pupils' progress in writing are realised. These improvements are particularly evident in pupils' work in both the early years and key stage 1. However, governors do not evaluate thoroughly the effectiveness of leaders' spending of additional funding on the rates of progress made by pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

You have an accurate view of the school. You remain ambitious in your aim to secure the very best outcomes for pupils. Your plans to improve the school further are appropriate, sharp and precise. For example, following the last inspection, you worked to improve the level of challenge for pupils during learning. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. As a result of your efforts, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to ask challenging questions of pupils.

Teachers plan learning in reading, writing and mathematics that matches accurately the needs of pupils. Teachers provide pupils with activities that stretch their thinking. This is especially the case in mathematics, where the most able pupils make exceptional progress at key stage 2. However, teachers do not consistently plan activities to allow pupils to make equally strong progress across the wider curriculum.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that the systems and procedures in place to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose. Pupils feel safe in school. They explained to me that there is someone in school that they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in key stage 1 learn about road safety. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from sessions about how to ride their bikes safely on the roads. All pupils learn about staying safe on the internet.

Leaders' systems to ensure that adults at the school are safe to work with pupils is secure. Staff receive relevant safeguarding training. As a result, they understand the procedures that they must follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Staff receive regular training updates to ensure that they stay alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse. Pupils report that bullying at the school is extremely rare, and they are confident that staff will deal quickly and effectively with any incidents. Pupils have an understanding and the utmost respect for pupils from different faiths and families, and also for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

## Inspection findings

- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. In order to strengthen the quality of teaching across the wider curriculum, you have developed the role of subject leaders. As a result, subject leaders check that all teachers are clear about leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve in subjects such as geography, science and history. This has already secured improvements in this area.
- Across year groups, teachers plan learning that allows pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding across the wider curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 4 explained to me how they learn about the Stone Age and the Vikings in history. In religious education, pupils in Year 2 learn about the differences between Christianity and Hinduism. Through leaders' introduction of the 'St. Helen's Promise', pupils benefit from further opportunities, including learning about how to stay healthy.
- Pupils explained to me how they value the range of extra-curricular activities on offer. They have the opportunity to be creative in 'craft club' and learn a new language in additional Spanish sessions. They welcome the prospect of developing their sporting talents through a number of after-school clubs, such as netball, hockey and football.
- Although pupils access a rich and varied curriculum, they do not make the same rates of progress across the wider curriculum as they do in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because, on occasion, teachers are not using assessment information as effectively to plan learning that challenges pupils.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities feel well cared for and happy in a school community that is respectful and inclusive. There are strong systems in place to allow staff to identify pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is particularly the case in the early years. This ensures that pupils and their parents receive timely support from staff.
- Leaders monitor closely the progress of all pupils, including those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This ensures that this group of pupils receive a wide range of help and support to allow them to make good progress from their starting points. However, for this group of pupils, governors do not evaluate thoroughly the effectiveness of leaders' actions on rates of pupil progress. Governors are therefore not able to ensure that leaders are effective in raising the achievement of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- I was interested in pupils' progress in reading at key stage 1. This is because, in 2017, pupils' attainment in reading at key stage 1 was slightly below the national average. This is no longer the case, as pupils across the school make good progress in their reading. This is because teachers accurately match texts to pupils' needs and there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics.
- Leaders carefully track pupils' progress in reading and quickly identify those pupils who fall behind. Staff then provide appropriate help and support to allow pupils to catch up. As a result, leaders' assessment information shows that a higher proportion of pupils are working at the standard expected by the end of

Year 2.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they evaluate more carefully the effectiveness of spending of additional funding on the rates of progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
- subject leaders embed assessment systems to ensure that teachers plan learning across the wider curriculum that is matched accurately to pupils' needs.

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 Gregory  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, a group of three subject leaders and, formally, with a group of eight pupils. I spoke with a number of pupils across a range of year groups during social times. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. I also spoke with the school adviser from the local authority and seven members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.

Leaders accompanied me on visits to classes where I observed teaching and learning across subjects. I looked at work produced by pupils in writing at key stage 1. I also looked at pupils' work across the wider curriculum at key stage 2. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and minutes from governing body meetings. I considered the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I also checked on the contents of the school's website.

I considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I took into account responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.