

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 September 2018

Mrs Debra Randall
Headteacher
Featherstone Purston St Thomas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior
School
George Street
Featherstone
Pontefract
West Yorkshire
WF7 5BG

Dear Mrs Randall

Short inspection of Featherstone Purston St Thomas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Purston St Thomas Junior School is a school where pupils are kept safe. Pupils' conduct is very strong and there are very few serious behavioural incidents. All of this helps pupils feel safe. Parents and carers agree that their children are safe and happy in school and report that bullying is rare. When they have an issue, they state that you and your staff are very approachable and respond quickly and effectively to their concerns.

Parents believe that their children do well in school and feel well informed about their progress. They also appreciate the efforts of your learning mentors in particular, who are regularly in the playground when parents take their children to school. Parents report that learning mentors listen to their concerns and take a real interest in their lives and those of their children. They also offer practical help when needed.

Teaching effectively engages pupils. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and this is seen in the pride they take in their work in books, which is well presented. Pupils enjoy their learning, which contributes to the strong progress they make. There are regular trips and special events in school, which further support

pupils' learning.

At the last inspection, inspectors made the recommendation that the school should improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding. This was so that standards of attainment, especially in writing, improved further. Pleasingly, writing outcomes are strong in the school and you have used the inspectors' advice well to bring about improvement. The inspectors went on to recommend that the improvements in teaching focused on pupils' written accuracy, especially around their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Again, this has improved and has led to the overall improvements in writing. Your work to encourage pupils to write more regularly has led to better-quality writing, as well as an increased passion for both reading and writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors make sure that the school's safeguarding arrangements work to keep pupils safe. All staff and governors receive regular training on safeguarding and child protection matters and this is updated when necessary. This means that your staff and governors understand their responsibilities around pupils' safety, and they know what to do when an issue around safeguarding arises. There are thorough checks on members of staff, including volunteers, to make sure that they are suitable to work and be with children. These checks meet legal requirements and you keep detailed records of them. As a school, you also keep records of any incidents that relate to pupils' safety and safeguarding. This ensures that you and your staff have a clear understanding of any issues and this helps the school to work effectively with external agencies. In particular, you have developed excellent working relationships with the local police to ensure that pupils feel safe in the community, as well as at school. The police develop positive relationships with the pupils and their families, which helps you as a school and further supports your work in liaising effectively with different external agencies.

The very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour, coupled with the rarity of bullying, confirm that pupils are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I wanted to understand what you were doing to ensure that work is suitably challenging for pupils. In particular, I wanted to see how well the needs of the most able pupils are served. This is because there have been too few pupils reaching the higher standards of attainment by the time they leave Year 6.
- You have also been keen to make improvements in this area and set a target for improving attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, especially for the most able. You have provided staff with training to this effect. Pleasingly, the work of pupils in their books, as well as the recent test scores, demonstrates that the training has been effective and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards of attainment has improved well, especially in writing.
- I was also interested to understand how well the disadvantaged pupils are

served. These pupils' progress and attainment have not been as strong as those of their peers. These pupils have started to perform better and, at times, these pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is stronger than that of their peers. However, despite clear improvements, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils still needs to improve further in order to eradicate remaining gaps in achievement between them and their peers.

- I wanted to check the assessment system in the inspection. Since the last inspection, there have been occasions where different groups of pupils have not achieved well. I wanted to understand if this was due to teachers' inaccurate assessment of pupils. However, it is clear that assessment of pupils is accurate and is used well by teachers to plan activities that meet pupils' needs well. This is seen by the improved and strong outcomes of different groups of pupils. It is also seen by leaders' use of assessment information to provide extra support for pupils, and to plan further training for teachers, to ensure that improvements continue.
- During the inspection, I wanted to find out how well pupils behave. Behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils' conduct is very positive and they demonstrate pleasing attitudes to their learning, all of which helps them to do well in their learning. Teaching is engaging and this means that pupils want to learn and do their best.
- Pupils' attendance is high. You have worked effectively, with support from local police liaison officers, to ensure that pupils and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance. Pupils arrive on time for school and are keen to start their learning. In addition, you have worked hard to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.
- The wider curriculum, supported by trips and events, supports pupils' enjoyment of their learning and helps to enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as their understanding of British values. For example, pupils understand that people make different life choices and follow different faiths and customs in Britain. They are very interested to understand these differences and know the importance of being respectful of the different ways people choose to live.
- At times, the wider curriculum is taught well. For example, in Year 4, pupils regularly undertake scientific experiments and investigations which develop their skills very well, as well as providing them with the chance to further develop their mathematics skills. However, the quality of teaching is not consistently good in the wider curriculum. Making sure that the most effective teaching practices evident in the wider curriculum subjects are shared among and used by all staff is an important next step for the school to address.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their oral communication skills so that they become confident speakers who can express themselves clearly and articulately. Teachers regularly question pupils and, in turn, pupils are keen to answer. However, teachers do not promote high enough expectations of pupils' responses. For example, teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to offer fuller explanations for their answers and this limits the

development of their oral communication skills.

- Governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the school. They understand the school's social context very clearly and work with you to ensure that the school serves the pupils' and the community's needs well. In this way, they question and challenge leaders well. They understand how well the school is doing compared to other schools nationally, and are ambitious to make further improvements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the work already started to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils continues so that any remaining gaps between these pupils and their peers continue to diminish
- the quality of teaching in the wider curriculum is consistently good and the most effective practice apparent in school is shared and used by all
- teachers promote high expectations of pupils' oral communication skills so that pupils are confident speakers who are able to express themselves clearly and articulately.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona McNally
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited a number of classes to observe teaching and its impact on learning. I also looked at a wide range of pupils' books from several year groups, across a variety of subjects. I met with you and your governors and with other senior and middle leaders. I also held telephone discussions with a representative from the local authority and with a representative from the diocese. In addition, I met with two police liaison officers who work closely with the school. I looked at the school's information about the safeguarding of pupils and examined behaviour, attendance and bullying records. I also checked a range of other documentation, such as your self-evaluation, your school development plan and your assessment information. I held formal discussions with some pupils from Years 3 to 6, and spoke informally to several pupils during breaktime. I also listened to four pupils read from Years 3 and 6. I considered the parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I also spoke to a number of parents in the playground as they dropped their children off at school.