

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



1 March 2019

Mrs Thomas
Headteacher
Livesey Saint Francis' Church of England School
Cherry Tree Lane
Cherry Tree
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB2 5NX

Dear Mrs Thomas

Short inspection of Livesey Saint Francis' Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 2019, 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 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The quality of education has declined since the last inspection. However, developments introduced recently, and particularly since the start of this school year, have begun to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Since the last inspection, there has been significant instability in the staffing of the school, including both the number and extent of absences of some teachers and at the most senior level of leadership. In one notable case, the employment of a temporary teacher has been beneficial to the pupils' education. While parents, carers and pupils acknowledge this, generally they are dissatisfied with the way that you and the governing body have managed teachers' absences.

Between the last inspection and the end of the last school year, the quality of learning deteriorated because the leadership of teaching was not good enough. Systems in the school to evaluate the impact of teachers' work on pupils' learning did not highlight the decline accurately because leaders' and teachers' evaluations were inaccurate. Governors did not challenge the information they were given with sufficient rigour. Leaders have been slow to address weaknesses identified at the last inspection.

The local authority and the diocese relied too heavily on old or superficial information when monitoring the school. Consequently, they only became aware of weaknesses towards the end of the last school year.

Once the local authority and the diocese established the extent of the school's decline, they acted promptly and very effectively to begin to help school leaders address the most important weaknesses. They arranged for an experienced headteacher, who is also a local leader of education, to become a temporary associate headteacher of the school. Her primary function was to support the acting headteacher who had been promoted from the role of deputy headteacher at the beginning of September 2018. The local authority and the diocese have also recommended and engaged a wide range of expertise to support the temporary leadership team in improving the work of the school, particularly teaching. The combined efforts of the acting headteacher, associate headteacher, the improved governing board, the local authority and the diocese have ensured that the school is now improving.

A larger proportion of parents than usual during an inspection expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching in the school, the progress pupils make and the quality of leadership. They were satisfied though, and inspection evidence supports this, that pupils are safe, well looked after and generally behave well. Pupils attend regularly. Their attendance is closely monitored, and effective action is taken when any pupil appears not to be attending as well as could reasonably be expected. It is evident that in this Church of England school, pupils' spiritual and moral development is very important. The school is very effective in promoting pupils' responsible attitudes and good behaviour. Pupils move around the school and interact at breaktimes harmoniously. It is a calm school. Pupils' cultural experiences are extended to include their developing understanding of religions, cultures and communities beyond their personal experience.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's caring culture is the key factor in ensuring that pupils in the school are safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils trust staff. They will confide in staff if they have any concerns about themselves or indeed other pupils. Safeguarding training is of good quality, up to date and frequent. All staff know with confidence when and with whom they should raise concerns about the safety or welfare of a pupil. The designated member of staff for leading safeguarding manages procedures and processes well, including ensuring that other agencies fulfil their responsibilities. Record-keeping is detailed and informative. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- The areas for improvement which were highlighted at the last inspection are only now beginning to change for the better. Typically, there was indecision about the best way to improve provision in the early years and how to improve pupils' progress in mathematics. Teachers across the school welcome the coherence and

clarity that the adoption of a single method of teaching mathematics has given them. Teachers say that they are much more confident in teaching mathematics well because they have very clear guidelines about what they should be teaching and how best to teach it. They also know how their teaching fits with what others are doing in the school. Last term and this, teachers have been given very effective training on how to teach mathematics well. There is a similar picture in early years. There is now greater structure to the day and the expectations of how well the children should develop are much higher. This is ensuring that children have become more enthusiastic about their learning and that they are beginning to reach the stages of development that are consistent with their age.

- While the attainment of pupils leaving Year 6 had been very broadly average, in 2018 there was a considerable decline in the progress the Year 6 pupils made in writing and mathematics. This was the result of the accumulation of weak teaching over many years. The systems leaders used to monitor the progress of pupils did not highlight weaknesses in teaching soon enough. School leaders are not clear as to why the progress these pupils made in reading was relatively strong.
- The concerted efforts made from September to improve the quality of teaching have begun to improve pupils' learning. Their books and other work, across all classes, show a watershed point at about October half term. It is evident that at that point, pupils started to work much harder, at much higher levels and much more successfully. They responded very positively to the additional challenges set by teachers. Their learning became much more organised and systematic. Their progress in English and mathematics has improved. They have started to work diligently and enthusiastically, taking pride in their work. Teachers are now giving a great deal more thought to planning learning activities so that they systematically build on pupils' prior learning. They are expecting much more of pupils, including expecting them to do a lot more work in class at higher levels. These improvements are at an early stage but are very encouraging. Teachers and leaders are aware that pupils have a lot of learning to catch up with. Pupils' learning in subjects beyond English and mathematics has been somewhat neglected. The work they do in science, through project work, and indeed in other subjects is not sufficiently challenging. It does not contribute to an effective, broad curriculum that will prepare them for future study.
- Governors did not hold you and other senior leaders to account well enough for school improvement. They have taken advice and reviewed the effectiveness of their procedures. They have recruited new members with a good range of skills and experience. They have undertaken training with a particular focus on understanding pupils' progress information. They are now in a much stronger position to fulfil their responsibilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors hold senior leaders more stringently to account for the impact of their work to improve the school

- the quality of teaching continues to improve, enabling pupils to make consistently strong progress from their starting points
- leaders and teachers accurately evaluate the effectiveness of their work to improve pupils' learning and use this information to secure further improvements
- the curriculum is broad, appropriately challenging and equally well taught across all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Throughout the inspection, I discussed with you, the acting headteacher and the associate headteacher many aspects of your school. I visited classes and spent time there with the acting headteacher observing pupils learn. I scrutinised the work they have undertaken since the start of the year. I met with three members of the governing body and spoke with two representatives of the local authority and one of the diocese. I spoke with pupils during their break. I scrutinised school documents including safeguarding checks, child-protection information and information about pupils' achievement. I met with four teachers and spoke to others in their classrooms. I received 35 comments from parents sent by text and took account of 39 responses parents made on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I also spoke to 10 parents as they brought their children to school. I took account of 15 staff responses to an inspection survey of their views and the responses of 62 pupils made through their survey.