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8 March 2018

Mr Mark Proctor
Headteacher
Accrington St John with St Augustine Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Proctor

Short inspection of Accrington St John with St Augustine Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Along with a supportive staff and other school leaders you have built on the improvements to the school that were recognised at the previous inspection. You have ensured that the school has continued to provide a nurturing environment for its pupils and there is shared ambition for further improvements to be made. You have effective plans in place to ensure that pupils' achievement further improves so that even more pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they leave key stage 2.

At the previous inspection you were asked to build on the good teaching that was already in place to raise pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics. You have been successful in addressing this challenge. Teaching is consistently good and improving with more challenge, especially for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics. I saw a great deal of high-quality writing during this inspection, not only in pupils' English books, but also in their geography and history books. In mathematics lessons pupils, across the school, now have regular opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems. As a result, they are becoming better mathematicians and making stronger progress in their learning than before. This was reflected in the improved mathematics results at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Improvements have also been made to reading since the previous inspection. Progress is good, but actions are not fully embedded to show an impact on standards.

A second area you were asked to improve was the role of middle leaders and you have also been successful in addressing this issue. Middle leaders now maintain a good overview of their subject areas and report regularly to senior leaders and governors. They have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement, and this is evident in the broad and exciting curriculum that is provided for pupils. The quality of teaching and learning, in subjects such as geography and history, has been a key driver in the school's recent improvement. Pupils now achieve well in these subjects. They develop good scientific knowledge and a broad understanding of the impact of geography and history on their lives.

The governing body provides a good level of support and challenge to school leaders. Governors know the school well. They are ambitious for the school, they know where strengths lie and understand what further improvements are required. They visit the school regularly and ensure that key policies and procedures, including those relating to safeguarding, are kept up to date.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. There are clear processes in place for staff to register any concerns that they might have about a pupil's welfare. Concerns are logged and regularly reviewed by senior leaders to ensure that appropriate action is taken, where necessary, to protect pupils. Leaders work effectively with families, and outside agencies where necessary, to ensure that pupils get the support that they need to thrive, both academically and socially. Staff keep meticulous records, relating to the checks that are made on adults who work in the school. These records are kept securely, and scrutinised on a regular basis by governors, to ensure that they are up to date.

As a result of the effective systems and strong commitment from all staff to pupils' welfare and safety, pupils feel safe at the school and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. Parents and carers agree that pupils are safe at the school. Pupils told me that they are well looked after and that behaviour at the school is almost always good. They said that bullying rarely happens and that they have confidence that adults will sort out any problems if they should occur.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I focused on a small number of specific areas to establish whether the school remains good. My first line of enquiry was pupils' progress in reading, particularly across key stage 2. I found evidence that improvements have been made in this area, which until recently had been a relative weakness. There has been a strong and determined focus on promoting reading among older pupils. They now read regularly, both individually and as part of whole-class activities during lessons. Each term, pupils read a class novel together and there is also a wide selection of reading books, in classrooms and the school library. Almost all the pupils I heard reading, during this inspection, were fluent and confident readers. Pupils told me that they now read regularly at home, and pupils in key stage 2 regularly produce a brief piece of writing about their current

reading book. I saw evidence of good levels of engagement in this reading challenge and older pupils told me that they enjoy reading and read widely and often. Although achievement in reading was well below the national average at the end of key stage 2 last year, the evidence I saw during this inspection suggests that current pupils make good progress. You acknowledge that these improvements now need to be reflected in stronger outcomes at the end of key stage 2.

- The second area that I looked at was pupils' behaviour, as there have been a relatively high number of fixed-term exclusions over the past two years. The behaviour that I saw during this inspection was extremely positive. During lessons, pupils demonstrated excellent behaviour for learning. They had good levels of concentration and were respectful towards each other and to the adults who teach them. Conduct was also good in the hall at dinner time. Almost all the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, said that behaviour at the school is good and that the school deals effectively with bullying. All members of staff who responded to the Ofsted survey said that behaviour is at least good. Pupils themselves told me that learning is rarely disrupted. They said that although there are a range of sanctions to deal with any disruptive behaviour, a first warning from the teacher is usually enough to address any issues.
- My third line of enquiry was the quality of provision in the early years, as there had been a recent decline in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. I found evidence of strengths in this area. There are good relationships between staff and children. Parents told me that staff are always available and that good links are established, between home and school, before children start in the Reception Year. However, there are some areas within the early years that are not as strong. Staff make regular observations and keep records of the activities that children are involved in and the work that they complete. This information is used as a record of children's experiences but is not used effectively to plan activities which challenge children of different abilities. This results in too many children not fully engaging in their learning as the activities fail to ignite their interest. Also, adults spend too much time supervising rather than actively engaging with children in their learning and using children's play to promote collaboration and language development.
- My final line of enquiry was to establish whether the most able pupils are being challenged well enough in writing and mathematics, as this was an area to improve at the previous inspection. The school has made good progress in addressing this issue. Since the previous inspection, the school has made significant improvements to the way in which mathematics is taught. The work seen in pupils' books shows that pupils of all abilities, including the most able, are regularly involved in work which challenges them to develop good mental strategies. They think deeply about how they apply their knowledge of mathematics to solve problems. Good progress has also been made in improving the progress the most able pupils make in writing. Teachers have high expectations of what these pupils can achieve, and this is reflected in both the quality of pupils' writing and the high standards of handwriting and presentation.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff use assessment more effectively in the early years to set work which challenges and engages children in their learning so that a greater proportion are ready for Year 1
- improvements that have been made in reading are embedded so that more pupils reach and exceed the expected standard at the end of key stage 2.

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

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. I also met with the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I spoke with parents, staff and pupils. I visited all classrooms, with the headteacher, to observe teaching and learning and spent time looking at the quality of work in pupils' books. I listened to pupils read and spoke with a group of Year 6 pupils about various aspects of school life. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at dinner time. I reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan and records relating to behaviour. I also took account of the staff questionnaire and the 22 responses to Parent View.