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Mrs Maureen Stansfield
Grindleton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Stansfield

Short inspection of Grindleton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 November 2016, 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 May 2012.

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 staff and governors you ensure that the school develops well-rounded young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school's Christian ethos and the work you do to promote British values of respect and tolerance are reflected in the pupils' good behaviour and in the harmonious relationships that are evident throughout the school. The school is highly inclusive and welcomes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are well supported to access the full curriculum alongside other pupils and they make good progress.

Parents appreciate the work that leaders and school staff do to ensure that all pupils are included and flourish. One parent wrote that her child had made 'amazing' progress since she came to the school, and adds: 'We knew from the minute we walked in and were welcomed so warmly that we had found the right place for her.' Pupils are also highly positive about all aspects of their school life. They enjoy not only their lessons but also the additional activities, school visits and sports provided by the school.

Areas for improvement at the last inspection included improving the quality of writing across the curriculum, eradicating weaknesses in spelling and handwriting and improving teacher marking. The school was also asked to ensure that all middle leaders have a greater role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and

learning in their areas of responsibility. Middle leaders have risen to this challenge. Work in pupils' books across a range of subjects, in all year groups, indicates that you have successfully improved teaching across a range of subjects. There are good examples of well-structured writing in English geography and history. Punctuation is progressively well used in all year groups. Cursive handwriting is now taught from early years and presentation throughout the school is of a good quality.

Writing seen in some Year 2 and Year 4 classes was of a particularly high standard, with a good use of vocabulary. The achievement of the most able pupils in writing remains an area that you are now addressing with renewed focus. There is clear evidence of good progress in writing as pupils move through the school. It is strong in Years 2 and 4, where pupils have produced work of a high standard for their age group. Writing seen in Years 5 and 6 was usually well structured and well presented, with a good range of punctuation. The writing of some most-able pupils lacks the breadth of vocabulary, sentence types and figurative language that would enable pupils to achieve at a greater depth.

Middle leaders work well with their colleagues in two partner schools to share good practice and moderate assessments of pupils' work. They each monitor their own subject area, providing guidance for improvement to other teachers. They have valued the training that they have received and have used it to support and train other school staff.

Outcomes since the last inspection have improved overall. Pupils enter the school at about national average and in recent years most have achieved at or above national average in all subjects. As pupil numbers are small there can be fluctuations in the general trend. For example in 2016 there was a dip in the proportion of pupils who achieved a good level of development in the early years. Similarly, the proportion of pupils to attain the phonics standard score in Year 1 dipped just below the national average. However, teacher records indicate that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disability, made good progress from their starting points. The progress of the most able pupils, however, is an area for development. In three of the last four years most-able learners in key stage 2 have not made consistently good progress in one or more subjects.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities that are provided across the three partner schools, including sports, after-school clubs, visits and residential trips. Year 6 pupils, for example, recently enjoyed their visit to the Manchester Velodrome. Personal development is promoted through links with the church, personal, social and health education and pupils' responsibilities within the school community. The school strongly promotes British values, fostering an understanding of what it is like to be a good citizen in modern Britain. This is evident in the good behaviour and attitudes that pupils display at all times.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the school has robust and effective policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils. Procedures for the appointment of staff are rigorous

and appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. The child protection policy has been updated in the light of the most recent advice in 'Keeping children safe in education (2016)'. Staff are well trained regarding child protection and internet safety and the school operates an appropriate internet filtering system through the local authority. Teachers have a secure understanding of their statutory duty to protect pupils from threats of extremism, radicalisation, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Pupils insist that teachers would strongly challenge any form of discriminatory language and would ensure that pupils did not face any type of discrimination.

Inspection findings

- As a leader you provide strong direction for improvement for staff and pupils in the school. It is clear in speaking to them that staff support your vision and aspirations for the school. You have put into place systems and procedures to help you secure improvement to pupils' achievement. Governors, the local authority and the diocese all value your strong leadership. They share your vision to develop pupils who achieve well academically but who are also well-rounded future citizens.
- You regularly see staff and pupils at work, which contributes to your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. You ensure that your middle leaders are well trained and have opportunities to share good practice and check the standard of pupils' work across the three partner schools. They monitor each other's work within their subject responsibilities and are able to provide guidance and advice for improvement. For example, the teacher who is the coordinator for special educational needs provides her colleagues with detailed support and advice for working with pupils who need additional support. These teachers form a strong team that is determined to secure improvement in their own practice and that of others.
- Governors are very committed to the school and they share your high expectations. They have a range of skills, for example in school finance and education, that enable them to regularly challenge school leaders with a range of sharply focused questions. Questions on finance, attendance and performance are evident in the minutes of governors' meetings.
- You have developed robust systems that allow teachers to track accurately the achievement of pupils. However, this analysis is not always used to plan lessons that challenge and meet the needs of the most able pupils. Accurate assessment of writing at both key stages under the new framework is also a high priority.
- Your self-evaluation is generally accurate but needs to be more sharply focused so that you can target more specific areas for improvement to better raise the attainment of all pupils.
- The quality of teaching continues to be good. School leaders compare what they observe in lessons with work in pupils' books and pupils' progress to assess the quality of teaching. Highly positive relationships in the classroom foster pupils' good attitudes to learning. Teachers plan lessons that engage pupils in their learning and support less-able pupils well. However, there was evidence in both English and mathematics lessons that teachers could do more to challenge the most able pupils through tasks that extended their learning. Pupils were able to

show me work of which they were proud that included art, poetry and well-presented creative writing. Teaching assistants work well with teachers to support pupils' learning, particularly across the early years and key stage 1. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive strong support from teachers and teaching assistants. The staff receive regular guidance from an external consultant with expertise in the autism spectrum disorder and other educational needs. As a consequence these pupils make good progress.

- Phonics is taught well from entry in the Reception class and across key stage. When they read aloud it is clear that pupils are able to break down and build up words well. Pupils read frequently in school and at home and they are encouraged to read for pleasure. Most-able pupils read fluently and were able to speak about books they enjoyed and their favourite authors.
- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum. Work seen by the inspector showed the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects. The pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is a strength of the school. It is delivered through assemblies, in religious education, in personal, social and health education and throughout the curriculum. For example, the current topic for the early years and key stage 1 is 'Celebrations', where pupils look at the festivals of different faiths and cultures. Its impact is evident around the school and in the very positive relationships. Pupils understand equality and tolerance of other faiths and cultures. They behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, friendly and wear their uniforms smartly. They are proud of their school and keen to do well.
- Procedures for tracking and supporting good attendance are strong. Attendance is above the national average. The attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities compares favourably with that of other pupils.
- Outcomes in the early years were above national average in 2014 and 2015 and were just below the national average in 2016. These outcomes represent good progress from children's starting points. The proportion of Year 1 pupils who attained the phonics standard was just below the national average. There were no Year 2 pupils in the school in 2016. Pupils in the current Year 2 made the progress expected from their starting points to the end of Year 1.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well; they make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The key stage 2 outcomes in 2016 showed that not all the most able pupils attained at greater depth. However, your own tracking information shows that all pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 made the progress expected of them from their starting points in 2015/16 to the end of the summer term.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils reach the standards of which they are capable given their starting points
- the school self-evaluation is sharply focused on strengths and specific targets for improvement to help secure improved outcomes.

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

Gena Merrett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, teaching staff, representatives of the diocese of Blackburn and the local authority and the governors. I spoke to pupils in lessons and I met pupils from the school council. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and to look at their work. I considered information about pupils' progress and attainment and the school's self-evaluation and action plans. I conducted a review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the impact of the school's policies to keep children safe, safeguarding checks and record-keeping including records of training. I considered information about the attainment and attendance of pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and I looked at minutes of governors' meetings. I took into account 14 responses by parents on the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, responses from parents I met at the school and a letter sent by a parent to the school for my consideration .

In this inspection, the key lines of enquiry were:

- How effective is safeguarding and is it embedded in the school's culture?
- What is the challenge for most-able pupils in lessons, given that, according to published information, they appear to have made slower progress than other pupils at key stage 2?
- What have school leaders done to improve writing across the curriculum and what is the quality of writing now across all subjects?
- How well do middle leaders now monitor and evaluate pupils' progress and work across all subjects?
- Did the attendance of pupils and with special educational needs and/or disabilities improve in 2015/16 and what is it currently?
- What progress are current pupils making towards age related expected attainment in each year group?