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Mr Daniel Hargreaves
Headteacher
Carnforth Christ Church, Church of England, Voluntary Aided Primary School
North Road
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Dear Mr Hargreaves

Short inspection of Carnforth Christ Church, Church of England, Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been important changes to leadership in the school, including your appointment and that of new governors. However, these changes have not slowed the pace of improvement in the school. Leaders have an absolute commitment to valuing the school's pupils. This is embedded in the school's clearly Christian ethos which recognises and celebrates each pupil's uniqueness. The pupils recognise that they are highly valued which gives them confidence. A group of pupils told me about how pupils get on well together and look after each other. After this, one confirmed how positive pupils are about the school and themselves by saying that 'the best thing about this school is us!' Pupils know that they are expected to work hard and to behave well. They meet these expectations, and so the school is calm, pleasant and focused on learning.

You have a clear view of the school's strengths and aspects which can be further improved. You have worked with staff as a team to tackle weaker aspects and are now at the stage where you have a firm foundation for all to raise their expectations even higher. Pupils' falling attendance became a concern shortly after the previous inspection. You and other members of staff were tireless in helping parents to understand why good attendance is so important and in following up any absences. This has been very successful and attendance is now consistently high.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified the need to improve the quality of teaching. In response, you have worked with governors and other colleagues to ensure that any new teachers have the skills needed to be effective and that existing teachers and teaching assistants work closely together. You have provided training and development opportunities for staff. An aspect of teaching which was less strong was teachers' challenge to pupils about presenting their work as well as possible. You now have samples of the high-quality work expected on display in each classroom. In addition, pupils know that they will have the privilege of using a handwriting pen taken away if they let their work become scruffy.

The school was also asked to extend leadership and management roles across a wider group of staff. There now are wider opportunities for leadership, particularly of different subjects. You have made sure that leaders are in the right roles to make the most difference, such as changes in leadership and teaching in the early years and key stage 1.

The parents I spoke with and who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire were very complimentary about the school. All those who responded would recommend the school to others. Parents have strong confidence in the work of the headteacher and how this shapes the work of other staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the safeguarding of pupils is given very high priority. The school's child protection policy is available for parents on the school's website and further information is available for staff at any time on the school's internal computer system. Training for staff is regular and keeps everyone up to date with the details they need. This means that staff know what to do should they identify any concerns. Governors have identified the right training to update their knowledge about safeguarding.

You have taken determined action to increase pupils' safety. Pupils are better protected because you had fencing put in to create safe areas for pupils, separate from open areas. Your approach also ensures that there is careful follow-up when the situation of any individual pupil has raised concern. You have been prepared to take a clear lead in working with other professionals to ensure that any such pupils are looked after as well as possible.

Pupils know that they are well looked after by staff and say that they feel safe. The parents I had contact with also felt that this was the case.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and other members of staff are highly committed to pupils and to giving them the knowledge, values and confidence they need to be successful. Changes to leadership and other staffing are well managed to ensure that pupils get the best deal possible.

- Governance has improved because the governing body has more stability in its membership. Governors receive clear information about the work of the school and this lets them demand answers to challenging questions. There is effective partnership between senior leaders and governors without compromising high expectations of leaders' work. The school has recently introduced a new website, but governors and leaders have not checked carefully enough that everything that is needed is included.
- Classrooms provide a stimulating learning environment. There are attractive wall displays which emphasise the school's values, give examples of what is expected of pupils' writing and support learning in English and mathematics. However, shared rooms which are used by different groups of pupils are less inviting. A new library area has recently been created but this is not yet fully tidy, and a room used for music and one part of the cookery room have too much clutter.
- Leaders analyse information about pupils' achievement carefully and take determined steps if pupils' outcomes are not as good as expected. Pupils in Year 6 have sometimes not done as well as the school expected. For example, in 2016, Year 6 pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly in line with those expected nationally. You had expected even better results. Similarly, the results in the national check on pupils' phonic skills have shown a downward trend in recent years. You know that with the small numbers in each year group, one or two pupils can make a big difference to outcomes. However, you do not use this as an excuse for inaction. You have ensured that teaching for pupils in all years is challenging, and reorganised the classes and teaching for the youngest pupils.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. The proportions reaching a good level of development have been consistently similar to or above those typically seen in other schools. Activities are organised effectively with a good balance between work led by staff and that chosen by children. Even though Reception children are in the same class as some Year 1 pupils, staff plan work to challenge children of different ages and at different stages in their learning. As in other classrooms, I saw these children thoroughly enjoying what they were doing and learning well.
- The outside learning areas for pupils in Reception and key stage 1 are safe and secure but are small, which limits the activities available.
- There are small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The provision for these pupils is effective, with a thorough system for identifying and responding to their needs. The special educational needs coordinator has recently introduced additional opportunities for parents of such pupils to meet with staff and so be more involved with their learning in school. Careful attention is paid to the medical needs of any pupils. When needed, leaders and staff work well with professionals outside the school to support pupils and their needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the expectations of staff, parents and pupils about academic achievement are raised even more so that more pupils exceed the rates of progress and standards expected nationally
- the high standards of organisation and tidiness in classrooms are seen in all shared areas
- the school's website includes all the required details so that parents and others have easy access to information they may need.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with governors and a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school and during lessons. I toured the school, accompanied by you. I observed teaching and learning in classes across the school and heard a small group of pupils read. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' books. I examined documents, including the school's information about safeguarding pupils, the school's self-evaluation document and the improvement and development plans. I considered 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with 11 additional written responses from parents, and spoke with some parents at the start and end of the school day. Three responses to Ofsted's survey for members of staff were received.