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Mr Anthony Currie
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Currie

Short inspection of Hesketh-with-Becconsall All Saints CofE School

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, although you acknowledge that there is more to do. Additional improvements that you have made, particularly concerning attendance, have added to the improvements in pupils' outcomes at all key stages. Your work to improve the way that teachers check on what pupils know and can do has helped to improve outcomes for pupils. However, the checks that teachers and other adults make are not consistent across all classes. You recognise that you should continue to share good practice to ensure that staff develop this further.

You have developed subject leadership very effectively since the previous inspection. You give subject leaders space and time to lead their subjects effectively. Leaders and governors base their plans for future development on a sound understanding of pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, checks made on teaching and learning and on research evidence. Subject leaders value the opportunities that you give them to develop professionally and to find out what works well in their subjects. They have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing and have clear plans for what needs to improve and how they will address this. There is a real team effort to improve outcomes for all pupils.

Teachers use questioning effectively to assess pupils' understanding. They use

pupils' responses to develop learning further. However, this is inconsistent across the school. Teachers are beginning to develop pupils' mathematical understanding and pupils' outcomes in mathematics have improved. However, the most able and middle-ability pupils are not challenged consistently to reach the higher standards in key stage 2. Added to this, there are more opportunities to develop further pupils' skills in investigating numbers and number patterns, particularly in key stage 2.

Governors are committed to the further development of the school. They use their skills to support and challenge leaders and they have ensured that they keep these skills up to date. Governors have faith in you and your leadership team to continue the improvement journey. Governors and staff particularly appreciate the clear systems and processes that you have put in place and the high level of support that you give to everyone.

Pupils are happy in this caring school. They live by the school's values, which ensure that all are welcome, catered for, prayed for and respected. Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. They show a high degree of care and respect for adults and for one another. However, leaders recognise that occasionally pupils become restless and learning slows when teachers do not move quickly enough from one part of the lesson to another.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors ensure that all policies and procedures are in place, including the required checks on teachers and governors. Training for staff is comprehensive and up to date. You demonstrate a determination to ensure that pupils are kept safe and your dedicated team supports you well. Consequently, all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- Pupils benefit from good teaching at all levels. Your staff use their good subject knowledge to ensure that teaching is matched well to pupils' needs. Consequently, most pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects. Disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress.
- A key line of enquiry for this inspection was the effectiveness of leaders' actions to increase the rate of progress in mathematics for the middle-ability and the most able pupils. Pupils' basic calculation skills are secure across the school. Most pupils are working at the standard expected for their age. In key stage 1, adults give pupils opportunities to investigate and play with numbers and to explain their mathematical thinking. For example, adults challenged pupils to work out the different combinations of sheep in fields if a farmer has 30 sheep in three fields and the sheep must be in multiples of five. Pupils were able to use their knowledge of the five times table to work out their response. Leaders acknowledge that teachers do not routinely offer the same opportunities in key stage 2.
- Another line of enquiry was the rate of pupils' progress in reading at key stage 2.

Your clearer focus on pupils' ability to understand what they have read and articulate their response is having a positive effect on their reading skills. In reading lessons, teachers ensure that pupils read and respond to the text in writing. Teachers challenge pupils to think about what they have read and to 'read between the lines'. This is beginning to have a positive effect, particularly on middle-ability pupils. Current pupils make good progress in reading from their different starting points in key stage 2. There is no difference in the rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. Pupils in key stage 2 read fluently and with expression. They can talk about what they have read.

- Some teachers, however, do not challenge the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, sufficiently in their independent reading. For middle-ability pupils in key stage 2, independent reading books are sometimes at too low a level. As a result, some pupils do not enjoy reading as much as they could and they do not achieve the higher standard. Leaders acknowledge that the selection of books for independent reading does not inspire pupils as much as it should and have recently invested in new high-quality texts for pupils.
- I also looked at the proportion of children reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Reception and leaders' actions to improve the rate of progress for boys in the early years. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has risen over time. It is now slightly higher than the national average. The decline in outcomes for reading, writing and mathematics has stabilised and these are now improving. There are now more children leaving Reception with skills and abilities above those typically seen for their age than there were in the past.
- Teachers encourage children to write for a purpose and give children equipment such as clipboards and a variety of writing tools to do so. For example, when pretending to put out the fire in the role play, children wrote about what they were doing.
- Teachers provide opportunities for children to write in different areas of the classroom. However, leaders acknowledge that this sometimes does not encourage boys sufficiently to excel. Additional writing opportunities would enable a greater proportion of boys to write at higher standards.
- Leaders have developed provision that encourages boys' development. For example, boys were actively engaged in making number lines in the outside space and persevered with ordering numbers to 20. They were also using their number skills when pretending to drive to a house to put out a fire. Adults' effective questioning helps to develop children's mathematical language, including that of boys.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards in mathematics by:
 - developing their skills in investigating numbers and number patterns

- giving them opportunities to explain their mathematical thinking in all classes
- teachers challenge the most able and middle-ability pupils in their independent reading so that a greater proportion reach a higher standard.

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

Tanya Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, members of your leadership team, teachers and governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. You and I visited classes to observe learning and I looked at work in pupils' books. I met with pupils throughout the day and spoke with three parents in the playground before school. I considered the 31 responses and the 28 free-text comments made by parents as part of the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I heard several pupils read and observed pupils in the playground and in the dining hall. I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding, including checking on the school's policies, procedures and record-keeping. I talked with you, other staff and governors about how the school ensures that children are kept safe. I also considered a range of other documentation, including school-improvement planning and information about pupils' progress and attainment.