

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 October 2016

Catherine Wigley
Headteacher
Pilling St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Ladies Hill
Pilling
Preston
Lancashire
PR3 6HA

Dear Catherine Wigley

Short inspection of Pilling St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. From your appointment in September 2015 you have taken rapid and decisive action to ensure that the school remains good. You are now building the foundations that you believe are necessary for the school to provide an even better quality of education in the future. You have managed considerable change well. This includes restructuring the teaching staff and the appointment of an assistant headteacher in May of this year. The governing body has also experienced considerable change with the appointment of five new governors. The chair is new to post. These changes have resulted in fresh energy throughout the school and a shared passion to improve. The current staff support your vision to provide an even higher quality of education – continuing to raise standards.

Pupils are very happy in school and the older ones say learning is now more fun and teaching is much better than before. Pupils comment on how helpful and supportive staff are. Pupils play well together at breaktimes and support each other well in classes. You have ensured that pupils gain a wide range of experiences, both within the school and through educational visits. Pupils' personal development is strong. They gain a broad understanding of the world, which will help them considerably in their future lives.

Areas for improvement identified during the last school inspection have been

addressed. The Reception Year provides a very strong foundation for future learning. Achievement in mathematics has become consistently good over a long period of time, including the achievement of the most able. Writing, too, has been well taught for many years. However, dated resources and a lack of good-quality training for teachers contributed to a decline in the standards of reading across the school. This was reflected in the reading results of last year's Year 6 pupils. Already, your decisive leadership has improved the quality of reading for current pupils throughout the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a considerable strength of the school. Adults care deeply about children in the school and so look out for them. Collectively, the staff and governors have a comprehensive understanding of how to keep children safe. They know how to identify and how to respond to concerns. Training is of a high quality, including for those new to the school. Staff receive regular training updates and shared information about children is current and appropriately detailed. The school staff member responsible for working with other agencies is tenacious in following up her referrals, ensuring agencies' responses are timely.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations because they have been well taught how to do this. Pupils also have very good relationships with adults around the school. This enables pupils to confide in adults if they were to have a worry about themselves or a friend. Pupils describe past boisterous playground behaviour that they felt was intimidating. They say this is diminishing significantly and that there is now a lot more to do at break and lunchtimes.

Procedures to ensure only suitable staff are recruited are secure.

Inspection findings

- There is a happy atmosphere and productive culture that pervades the whole school. Pupils are highly respectful of each other and adults. The very positive and caring ethos lifts pupils' spirits and encourages them to do well. Pupils receive a good and broad education. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Both you and school governors have demonstrated that you have considerable capacity to evaluate how well the school is performing with a high degree of accuracy. You and school governors have also demonstrated that you share a passion to improve the school, have good skills to plan for further improvements and the necessary drive to achieve these improvements.
- Across the school, pupils make good progress. Children settle quickly into Reception, adopting routines and making new friends. No time is wasted and they quickly develop their reading skills through phonics sessions where pupils learn how to blend sounds to read words. Their number skills are developed rapidly too. Children leave Reception confident and well prepared for their next stage.

- You have identified a little variation in the progress pupils make in mathematics across key stage 1. However, across the school pupils make good progress in mathematics as they do in writing. You are taking effective action to improve the teaching of mathematics in key stage 1.
- Your rapid action to improve reading is having a very positive impact on pupils' reading across the school. You have introduced a new phonics scheme. You have brought the library to the heart of the school and have purchased a significant number of books that children enjoy reading. You have avoided any 'quick fixes', your changes have already improved reading across the school and they provide scope for further improvement. You are aware there is still work to do and you believe that improved reading is essential in raising standards yet further.
- The proportion of pupils in school who are considered to be disadvantaged is small when compared to national figures. However, these pupils are not ignored. Your pupil tracking system clearly identifies them and teachers are aware which pupils are disadvantaged. You and teachers do not let these children fall behind. In fact, their rates of progress are generally similar to or better than advantaged pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well from their starting points. Detailed diagnostic analysis leads to accurate identification of need and a comprehensive understanding of how to provide individualised support. Pupils, teachers and teaching assistants are clear about what they have to do to improve.
- The most able pupils in your school make good progress. I know you are paying particular attention to their achievement and I share your belief that with even higher teacher expectations of what these pupils can achieve they will make even more rapid progress.
- Teachers can identify good training that is helping them improve their teaching. Some of the staff are highly skilled in motivating pupils and ensuring that they concentrate for a long period of time. They have appropriately high expectations of their pupils. These teachers provide the school with a valuable opportunity for others to learn how to fully engage pupils and drive up standards.
- In the past, there was extensive use of additional support sessions. These helped pupils catch up on learning that had not been well taught in class. You have recognised this and improving the quality of class teaching has reduced the need for these sessions. Once again, there is still more to be done.
- Parents who provided me with written comments were overwhelmingly positive. They recognise and value the improvements you have made to the school. They appreciate the care all of your staff give to their children and believe their children are very well looked after. These parents say that communications between school and home are very effective. Those numerous parents who have moved their children to this school from others, say they are very pleased with their decision. One parent seemed to sum

opinions up when they wrote 'The teachers and staff are fantastic and will go above and beyond for the pupils and parents. I would highly recommend this school to others.'

- Pupils too, speak highly of the education and care they receive. They say that they are keen to come to school and indeed they attend very well.

Next steps for the school

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue to improve the quality of pupils' reading throughout the school, by:
 - developing a stronger culture for reading, leading to even more pupils reading for pleasure and reading widely
 - developing pupils' comprehension skills and their ability to read for extended periods of time
 - supporting parents to help their children read well.
- They should ensure that rates of progress of all pupils continue to improve, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve even further
 - sharing the most effective teaching practice throughout the school.
- They should also further reduce the frequency pupils are given additional support to make up for learning that was not grasped well enough in lessons.

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

Neil Mackenzie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Much inspection activity focused on how well:
 - pupils are taught to read
 - different groups of pupils achieve across all subjects
 - pupils progress through Reception and key stage 1
 - pupils are protected.

- In addition, I considered to what extent all levels of leadership have sufficient capacity to improve the school further.

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, groups of pupils and six members of the governing body. I met with a group of teachers and teaching assistants. Documents were scrutinised including: external audits, safeguarding checks, logs of pupils' behaviour, pupil achievement tracking and records of checks on the quality of teaching. I also visited classrooms with you to speak to pupils, look at their books and observe their learning. I took account of the 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 28 parental comments. I also took account of a survey completed by six members of staff and a survey completed by 19 of your pupils. I met with a representative of the local authority.