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Janet Cooper
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Dear Mrs Cooper

Short inspection of Longridge Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 February 2012.

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 the other members of the leadership team have ensured that pupils in the school are safe, happy and achieve well. The school's mission statement, 'Living, learning and sharing in a loving Christian family,' very accurately describes life at Longridge for the pupils and staff. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and almost all would recommend it to others. One parent's comment that 'The school offers a friendly environment where children are encouraged to do the best they can' was typical of parents' appreciation of the school.

Throughout the school there is an atmosphere of calm and mutual respect. At the previous inspection, the inspector noted that pupils' behaviour in lessons was 'often exemplary.' Pupils' conduct remains a strength of the school that is also seen in their good behaviour on the playground and around school. Pupils have no concerns about bullying and trust staff to deal effectively with occasional instances of silly behaviour. The pupils themselves are delightful. They are polite, friendly and considerate of others' needs. They are full of enthusiasm for learning and very clearly enjoy the well-designed curriculum that is on offer to them, and the range of clubs and activities in which they can participate.

The areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection have been tackled successfully. Work in books shows that pupils take care with their

handwriting and that their presentation is neat. Teachers' feedback is effective in helping pupils to see how their work could be improved, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' progress in a range of subjects. Attractive displays around school showcase the writing that pupils, particularly in key stage 2, have produced for different purposes and in different subjects. These displays include postcards from evacuees, explanations of science experiments and advertisements for stone-age dwellings. They also very effectively illustrate the breadth of the school's curriculum.

You, other members of the leadership team and governors, are ambitious for the school and have a shared vision of excellence. To help reach your goal of making Longridge the best school that it can be, you have ensured that the school's self-evaluation is rigorous and that its findings are used to plan further improvements. In the past two years this approach has secured significant improvements in achievement in early years and in the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics. In a similar way, a relative weakness in pupils' spelling was identified this year and strategies were put in place to tackle the issue. Early signs are that this work, supported by pupils' increased skill in using their knowledge of phonics to 'sound out' words, is having a positive impact. This improvement further illustrates the good capacity that school leaders have to keep moving the school forward.

There is no suggestion, though, that you and your fellow school leaders are content to rest on your laurels. You acknowledge that there is more work to be done. For some time, pupils' attainment in writing in key stage 1 has not been as strong as in reading and mathematics. Teachers' expectations of the quantity and quality of the work that pupils produce are not high enough, and this limits the progress they make during key stage 1. You have recognised that pupils' spelling was not strong enough, and work is ongoing to improve it. You also recognise that not enough of the most able pupils in key stage 1 reach the highest levels. This is because teachers do not consistently provide the most able pupils with work that challenges them, or do not move them on to the more challenging tasks as quickly as they might.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff recognise the importance of their role in keeping pupils safe, and have a good understanding of what to do if they are worried about a pupil's well-being. Where staff have raised concerns, leaders responsible for safeguarding have made sure that these have been followed up diligently and recorded meticulously. Effective links have been established with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need. Rigorous checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to the school to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children.

Governors have played their part by making sure that the school provides a safe and secure learning environment. Both staff and governors take part in regular training so

that they have up-to-date knowledge of good practice in safeguarding. Pupils also display an impressive knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, confidently explaining how to use the internet safely and what is meant by 'stranger danger'.

Inspection findings

- Your ambitious vision for the school is shared by staff and governors. Staff morale is high and staff feel well supported by senior leaders. They appreciate the access they have to a range of opportunities for professional development and recognise the positive impact these have had on their own practice and on the overall quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide you and other leaders with a very effective balance of challenge and support. They have overseen a substantial programme of refurbishment that has created a bright and welcoming school environment. The governing body has also ensured that financial decisions that it makes have a positive impact on pupils' learning. This can be seen in the effective use of additional funding to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and in the development of a dedicated space for the delivery of additional support programmes.
- Reading is taught particularly well throughout the school, and by the time they leave Year 6, pupils' attainment is typically above the national average. The very effective teaching of phonics equips younger pupils with the skills they need to tackle unfamiliar words. As they grow in confidence and competence, pupils make informed reading choices, reading non-fiction books to find out information as well as enjoying a wide range of fiction books by authors such as JK Rowling and David Walliams.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for. Teachers regularly check on their progress and attainment, and extra support is put in place to help them to catch up. As a result, these pupils achieve well from their different starting points.
- Any differences in the performance of boys and girls across the school are specific to the make-up of individual classes. Evidence in pupils' books, and from talking with pupils about their work, confirms that boys and girls throughout the school typically perform equally as well as each other.
- The school provides pupils with a wide-ranging and interesting curriculum. Teachers enhance pupils' learning experiences by organising trips to places of interest, such as the Imperial War Museum, and providing memorable activities in school, such as tasting types of food that people in Ancient Greece may have eaten. Pupils spoke knowledgeably and enthusiastically about the topics that they were covering and particularly enjoy their work in history, geography and science.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, enjoy learning about people from other cultures and religions and show great empathy for people facing challenging times. This was well illustrated by a series of prayers that pupils had written entitled 'Prayers for Paris.'

- Parents' views of the school are extremely positive. Almost all of those parents I spoke with, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, appreciate the level of care and support that their children receive. They also commend the quality of the school's communication with home, and so feel that they are able to play an important role in their children's learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide the most able pupils in key stage 1 with greater challenge so that more of them reach the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- teachers have consistently high expectations of what all pupils in key stage 1 can achieve in their writing.

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 Dixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Prior to the inspection, I identified a number of questions which formed the basis of my work in the school:

- Are pupils making enough progress in writing, and how effectively is the school tackling relative weaknesses in pupils' spelling?
- Are pupils in key stage 1, particularly boys and the most able, building on the good start they get in early years and making good progress?
- How well has the school adapted its curriculum in the light of recent changes, and is the curriculum suitably broad, balanced and effective at promoting pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development?
- Are the school's arrangements for keeping children safe effective?

During this short inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the subject leader for English, teaching and support staff, and five members of the governing body. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority. I considered the 25 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents at the start of the school day. The five responses to the online questionnaire for staff were also considered. We visited all classrooms jointly to observe teaching and learning, look at books and talk with pupils. I met with a

group of pupils during the day, and heard a number of other pupils read. I also observed pupils on the playground at breaktime. I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding, including checking on the school's policies, procedures and record keeping and talking with you, the leader with responsibility for safeguarding, other staff and governors about how the school ensures that children are kept safe. I also considered a range of other documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and information about pupils' progress and attainment.