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Mrs Claire Gilmour
Headteacher
St Annes on Sea St Thomas' Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gilmour

Short inspection of St Annes on Sea St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2019, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in January 2017 you have acted decisively and motivated your staff to achieve the very best for every pupil. You have ensured that your plans for improvement are detailed and focused on providing the best provision for the pupils in your care. In addition, you have made sure that staff receive relevant training. Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate.

The school has a truly inclusive character. You and your staff know every family very well. Relationships with families are extremely strong and there is a welcoming, open culture. The inclusion manager is extremely knowledgeable about the support that is available to families and she ensures that they are directed to a range of agencies that can help them. The school's nurture room provides a safe environment in which pupils can build their confidence, develop skills and ultimately thrive.

Behaviour is good. Classrooms are calm and pupils move around the school sensibly. Pupils said that everyone tries very hard in the school to be kind to each other. They say that bullying and name-calling are rare but they are confident that if they did happen adults would deal with it quickly and decisively.

Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. All those who spoke to me were

very happy with the provision made for their children. They highlighted the caring ethos in the school and they were happy that their children were making strong progress. The vast majority of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents. One typical comment was, 'St Thomas' stands out, by going the extra mile.'

The school has a wide and varied menu of after-school clubs, including baking, netball, science, gardening and acting clubs. Parents are very appreciative of the many opportunities that pupils receive. Pupils say that after-school clubs are very well attended and they particularly like the range that is offered as there is something for everyone.

Governors know the school well. They are very supportive and pay frequent visits to classrooms. They are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold leaders to account with some challenging questions about how well the school is doing. The governing body is very appreciative of the support it has received from the local authority. This support has included training for staff to improve their teaching even further and has allowed you to grow in confidence as a headteacher.

When inspectors last visited the school they asked you to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics. The school has reviewed the way it teaches mathematics. Pupils are given many opportunities to use their reasoning skills and practise their arithmetic. Teachers have high expectations and ensure that the work is challenging. As a result, the number of pupils achieving the higher standard at the end of key stage 2 is increasing.

In addition, you were asked to develop the role of subject leaders so that they could monitor pupils' work and check on progress. The roles of subject and middle leaders have been developed well. They are involved in regular monitoring and evaluation activities in their different subject areas. They check the quality of work in pupils' books and share their findings at staff meetings. Teachers also work with colleagues in local schools and this allows them to discuss ideas and share good practice.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have a robust recruitment process. The systems in place to check that adults at the school are fit to work with children are effective. Staff receive appropriate and timely safeguarding and child-protection training and receive weekly emails that give them up-to-date safeguarding information. They are all familiar with the online reporting system and they know what they must do if they are concerned about a child.

Pupils feel safe in school. They were particularly keen to tell me about all the new fences and locks that protect the school grounds. Older pupils also explained that they are listened to in school and there is always an adult to talk to. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online and while using the internet. For example, they know not to share personal information online and to tell an adult if

they see something inappropriate.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on three lines of enquiry, the first of which was about the effectiveness of teaching writing. You were rightly disappointed with the progress made by pupils in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. You quickly identified this as an area for improvement and acted swiftly to address the decline. Staff have attended a range of training courses to develop their skills and raise expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing. Current work in pupils' books shows that they are writing with more flair and greater stamina. The sentence structure and vocabulary have both improved. However, some of these improvements are still at an early stage and your assessment information shows that not enough pupils are writing at the higher standard. This is because basic punctuation and handwriting mistakes are not always addressed systematically and consistently.
- Next, I looked at how well the curriculum was planned and implemented to ensure progress across a range of subjects. Recently, leaders have begun to review the curriculum. There has been a particular focus on improving the teaching of science and this has been successful. The work in pupils' books shows that they undertake a range of experiments and investigations. For example, in Year 3 pupils studied the permeability of rocks by using different types of cakes to replicate the rocks. They have the chance to study famous scientists and Year 5 pupils are trained as science ambassadors. Pupils get many opportunities to develop their design-technology skills. For example, Year 1 made Tudor houses and Year 5 made moon buggies. Pupils were able to tell me about the topics they have studied, including the Plague, The Great Fire of London and the Second World War. You and other leaders are keen to ensure that opportunities are developed even further so that pupils acquire in-depth knowledge in every subject.
- Finally, I looked at how well disadvantaged pupils are taught across the school. The inclusion manager has a detailed knowledge of disadvantaged pupils in the school. Working alongside a governor she has identified the barriers to learning that these pupils may face and built good relationships with their families. Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent effectively to support this group. This includes access to the nurture room in school, trips and other extra-curricular opportunities. However, the way in which the progress of these pupils is tracked is not always reliable and consequently teachers are not as aware as they could be of the progress they are making.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils is tracked effectively
- basic skills such as punctuation and handwriting are as good as they can be.

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

Emma Jackson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, middle leaders and members of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority and I talked with pupils in a meeting and in classrooms. I took account of 40 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, 30 responses to the pupil survey and 14 responses to the staff survey. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation document and school-improvement plan and looked at the minutes of governors' meetings. I looked at safeguarding and evaluated the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe.