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Miss Elizabeth Seedall
Headteacher
Thorneyholme Roman Catholic Primary School
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Dear Miss Seedall

Short inspection of Thorneyholme Roman Catholic Primary School, Dunsop Bridge

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 May 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 September 2018, you and the deputy headteacher have ensured that there is a clear vision for the school. You have ensured that the school remains good. You describe the deputy headteacher as 'the heartbeat of the school'. She has ensured consistency over recent months. You say that you have valued her extensive knowledge of the school and the community. You complement each other well. You are able to work as an effective team to identify the school's strengths and areas for development.

The governing body has been strengthened in recent months. A number of new governors have joined the board. They have brought with them a range of skills and experience. Governors hold leaders robustly to account for the quality of education in the school. Alongside the local authority, the governors have a good understanding of the school's position. Governors are working hard to secure a sustainable future for the school.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. Small numbers mean that pupils know each other really well. Pupils get along well together. Pupils understand the school's behaviour system and are very appreciative of the rewards for good behaviour. For example, they particularly enjoy their trips to the forest.

The enrichment of the curriculum is a strength of the school. Teachers are conscious that pupils live in a very rural area, and so provide pupils with many opportunities to learn about the wider world. The school is a Unicef Rights Respecting School. Pupils are given opportunities to learn about their rights and the rights of others. They have studied topics such as global warming and child soldiers and learned about life in other parts of the world. Pupils regularly watch the news together. During the inspection, pupils were discussing the Conservative Party leadership campaign.

The number of children in key stage 1 and early years is extremely low. Children enjoy the caring atmosphere in class. However, sometimes children are not given enough opportunities to learn for themselves and work independently away from adults.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to address a number of areas for improvement. Firstly, you were asked to increase teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils could achieve. These expectations have risen. Teachers set challenges and extension tasks that allow pupils to think more deeply. Pupils are also given more opportunities to use mathematics across the curriculum. For example, pupils draw graphs and interpret data in both science and computing. Staff are given the opportunity to work alongside colleagues from other schools, both as part of your collaboration and in the wider cluster of schools. This allows them to build their skills and knowledge.

You were also asked at the last inspection to improve outdoor provision in the early years. The school has worked hard to develop an effective and inviting outdoor area for the children to learn in.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are well trained and know what their role is in keeping pupils safe. Staff know what to do if they are concerned about a child. The arrangements you have for appointing staff, governors and volunteers are robust. Regular checks are made to make sure that all adults are suitable to work with children.

Pupils said that they feel safe and are well looked after by all adults in school. They said that there is always someone to talk to if they are worried or concerned about anything. Older pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe on the internet. They are aware of issues that can occur on social media. They also understand that it is important to tell someone if there is something that makes them feel uncomfortable.

The perimeter fence is not as secure as it could be. However, you have acted swiftly and put plans in place to secure the site. In the meantime, a robust risk assessment and lockdown procedure are in place.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of lines of enquiry. The first looked at how well teachers teach writing across the school. Writing is taught well. Pupils are given many opportunities to write at length. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils write with flair, particularly in key stage 2. Evidence in pupils' books shows that work is presented well. Sentence structure, punctuation and spelling are good. Pupils make strong progress. The writing that pupils produce is engaging. For example, some pupils produced information leaflets about the Lake District and were able to compare it with Lancashire in their writing.
- Next, I looked at the progress that pupils were making in mathematics, particularly the progress of the most able pupils. Teachers have received a range of training opportunities. You have reviewed the way that you teach mathematics. As a result, pupils have a greater understanding of mathematical concepts. Work in pupils' books shows that they are able to use their arithmetic skills and apply them to problem-solving activities. Younger pupils are given practical apparatus and real-life situations to practise their skills. For example, key stage 1 pupils cut up sandwiches to develop their understanding of fractions.
- Finally, I looked at how well the curriculum was planned and implemented to ensure that pupils make progress in a range of subjects. Leaders have worked hard to plan a curriculum which meets the needs of all the pupils in each class, whilst ensuring that they can all learn together. The teaching of science has been reviewed this year. Evidence in pupils' books indicates that pupils make strong progress. They are able to plan and carry out investigations effectively, while using the appropriate scientific vocabulary. Teachers ensure that the national curriculum is covered in lessons, so that pupils can study all the subjects and a range of topics in detail. The extensive enrichment activities form part of what the pupils learn every day. These are highly engaging and contribute to the rich and memorable curriculum. For example, pupils said that they particularly enjoy the opportunities that they have to visit the forest school, where they can engage in a range of outdoor activities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they increase opportunities in early years and key stage 1 to encourage children to become more independent and keen to try things out for themselves.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, 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, the deputy headteacher and members of the governing body. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority. I talked with pupils in a meeting and in classrooms. I took account of five responses to the online questionnaire for parents. 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 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.