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Miss Jane Hodgkinson
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Dear Miss Hodgkinson

Short inspection of Warrington St Barnabas CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 2018, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead a welcoming and inclusive school, which is firmly rooted in Christian values. Pupils learn to live out the school's motto, 'Preparing for a positive future, achieved through faith'. Through a range of leadership opportunities, pupils help others and develop as kind and caring individuals. Staff and governors focus strongly on well-being. This ensures that the needs of the most vulnerable pupils are met. Your carefully planned and engaging curriculum gives pupils many opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in different subjects. Since the previous inspection, standards have risen and pupils achieve well. Leaders and governors are aspirational for the school and keen to raise standards still further, including for the most able pupils.

You have developed an enthusiastic and skilled team of staff, who welcome the training you give them to improve their skills. Leaders use their accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school to tailor ongoing professional development. There is a strong focus on staff training at all levels. You have provided effective training for subject leaders to fulfil their role. You hold teachers to account for the quality of teaching and learning in each subject area. This has had a positive effect on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils, particularly in reading. Strong support for leaders and teachers in the early years has resulted in an increasing proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception. The recent training that you have provided for staff is improving pupils' progress in writing and mathematics. You are providing

further training for teaching assistants to support pupils in developing their writing skills.

Your skilled governing body shares your high ambitions for the school. Governors are keen for staff to build on recent improvements in mathematics and writing outcomes, so that pupils, including the most able, make even better progress. Governors meet with staff regularly and know the school well. Governors use their knowledge and skills to provide a good balance of challenge and support for leaders. Governors keep a careful check on safeguarding arrangements and ensure that they are of a high quality.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work that the headteacher has done to improve the school. They are particularly impressed by the support that teachers give to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is because staff provide a range of well-planned support, including for pupils' social and emotional needs.

Those pupils with whom I spoke during the inspection said that they enjoy the many leadership roles you give them, including 'Team Spirit' and 'Junior Safety Officers'. Pupils lead a variety of activities and events, such as assemblies about online safety and staying safe in the community. Pupils appreciate the engaging curriculum you have planned, which is enhanced by many extra-curricular clubs, such as robot club and animal club. Trips, for example history visits to local museums, develop pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. Pupils enjoy outdoor and adventurous residential trips in Years 2, 4 and 6. Opportunities such as these support pupils to develop as considerate, confident and resilient individuals, well-prepared for their next stage of education.

The majority of parents and carers view pupils' behaviour as good. Staff teach pupils to value differences and to care for others. This is reflected in pupils' calm and considerate behaviour in class and around school. However, some parents raised concerns about bullying. During the inspection, I found that pupils behave very well. Leaders have taken effective steps to reduce incidents of misbehaviour. Staff provide support for pupils with behavioural needs and this has had a positive impact. Behaviour logs and interviews with staff, leaders and pupils confirm that bullying is not a problem in the school. Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They are confident that staff listen to their concerns and deal with any misbehaviour.

Leaders have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Teachers have improved the challenge that they give to pupils in mathematics. Teachers plan a range of practical activities to improve pupils' confidence and understanding in mathematics. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows that they develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Pupils use their mathematical skills across different areas of the curriculum. For example, in history, Year 5 pupils used their skills to calculate the volume of a pyramid. As a result of these effective steps to improve achievement in mathematics, standards have risen.

However, the changes that leaders have made are recent. The attainment of the most able pupils remains below national averages by the end of Year 6.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. They have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough and of high quality. Visitors and staff are reminded that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Leaders hold regular and appropriate safeguarding briefings and training for staff to keep them alert to any risks and attentive to procedures. Useful safeguarding information about how to report any concerns is displayed around school. All staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. Leaders use the school's website to give parents information and advice about keeping children safe. You ensure that the curriculum has opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe in the wider community, including road safety, bike safety and fire safety.

Leaders have made sure that statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children. Governors check that the appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection. You have taken effective actions to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place for pupils.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which was to check how regularly pupils attend school. Pupils value their education and attend very regularly. Leaders check pupils' attendance daily and follow up absences with parents. Leaders have put in place a range of support and initiatives to raise attendance for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. As a result of these effective actions, attendance has improved over time and is above national averages. A small number of pupils are persistently absent. Leaders are proactive in working with these pupils and their families to improve attendance; this is having a positive impact.
- The second key line of enquiry was to check whether leaders have planned provision in the early years to meet the needs of the youngest children. Staff provide a safe and nurturing learning environment which is well-matched to children's needs. For example, children have a calm and quiet area to rest or sleep when needed. Staff speak gently to children and model language appropriately to develop their communication and language. Teachers use their knowledge of children's learning to plan engaging activities which match the children's needs and interests. Leaders make careful checks on children's progress. The next steps recorded in children's two-year-old checks are precise. This group of children settle quickly into school and make good progress from their starting points.
- The next key line of enquiry was to assess how well leaders develop children's reading, writing and mathematics skills in the early years. Leaders have put in place a range of training and support to improve provision in the early years

classrooms. Standards have risen. The learning environments have been enhanced to provide a range of interesting activities which capture children's interest and develop their skills. Reading areas are cosy and inviting and include bright and attractive books. A range of printed word and text is on display across the learning environments. Children write enthusiastically for a range of different purposes. Staff develop children's number skills by planning engaging opportunities for children to learn. As a result of the activities that staff plan, children make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics.

- For my final key line of enquiry, I checked on the progress that the most able pupils make in their writing. This was because the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in writing by the end of Year 6 has been below national averages over time. During the inspection, I found that you have made recent changes to the way that staff teach writing. This is having a positive impact. Learning displays are used to celebrate examples of high-quality writing across the curriculum. Pupils' workbooks show that they write at length and for a range of different purposes. They choose ambitious and interesting vocabulary to make their writing more interesting to read. However, pupils' handwriting is sometimes untidy and difficult to read. Pupils do not use their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills with accuracy, including the most able pupils. This slows the progress that they make and is a barrier to more pupils attaining greater depth. The changes that you have made to improve pupils' writing skills are still being embedded. Staff are taking steps to improve pupils' outcomes, including further training for staff.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they raise pupils' attainment in writing by improving the accuracy of pupils' use of grammar, punctuation and spelling
- they improve pupils' handwriting across the school
- a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standard in mathematics and greater depth in writing by the end of key stage 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warrington. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, middle leaders and teachers. I met with the school's pastoral lead with responsibility for behaviour and attendance. I also spoke to five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority and the virtual school headteacher with responsibility for children in the care of the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons. I visited classes with you where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils.

I took account of 24 free-text responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. I also met with parents before school. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and pupils' behaviour logs. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, staff training records, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.