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Mr Alan Brindle
Headteacher
Heskin Pemberton's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Brindle

Short inspection of Heskin Pemberton's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 2013.

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 established a collaborative approach to school improvement and earned the respect of staff, governors, pupils and parents. Staff morale is high. Staff feel well supported and appreciate your consideration of their well-being.

Strong teaching in all classes ensures that pupils achieve well. Across the school, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected standards in these subjects are consistently above the national average. Teachers' very effective use of well-trained support staff further enhances the quality of education your school provides. The enthusiasm of all teaching staff motivates pupils, develops their curiosity and instils a love of learning.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work, with several describing the school as 'a gem' of the community. Many commented on the approachability and professionalism of you and your staff and how you inspire their children. Parents particularly value the school's close-knit family atmosphere and distinctive Christian ethos. All these features were clearly recognisable during my visit.

You lead the school purposefully and effectively. With the support of your senior teacher and staff team, you have built on the school's strengths, dealt with some

urgent improvements and prioritised developments to ensure that the school continues to improve. A main priority this year is to review, evaluate and redesign the curriculum. You are keen to ensure that the curriculum remains suitable for pupils and your school's circumstances. This focus is timely. Pupils receive a wealth of interesting learning experiences and are well prepared for secondary school when they leave Year 6. In this important respect, leaders' broad curriculum intentions are met. However, there is a lack of precision over what leaders intend pupils will know and understand in all subjects at each stage of their education.

The school's gospel values are woven through the curriculum. Many encompass the principles that underpin fundamental British values. However, British values are not taught explicitly. Within your evaluation of the school's work you have rightly identified this as a priority for improvement. The school's gospel values play an important part in developing pupils as well-rounded young citizens. Nonetheless, the leaders' aim to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in a diverse society is not fully met. This is because the curriculum does not include all the aspects of equalities required by legislation.

When the school was last inspected, leaders were asked to give greater attention to providing work to motivate boys. This recommendation has been addressed very effectively. The boys I spoke with told me about their enjoyment of school and the challenging work they do. The displays and samples of pupils' work I reviewed, and the topics that teachers plan, show that careful thought is given to inspiring boys' interest as much as that of girls. In English, for example, boys and girls have produced equally accomplished poems about the First World War. Written in the style of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', the poems show pupils' good understanding and application of literary features, including rhythm, repetition, personification and metaphor. Pupils' research into the Chorley Pals and the Battle of the Somme clearly inspired their poems, as well as increasing their historical knowledge. Over time, there are no significant differences between the progress and attainment of boys and girls.

Pupils behave very well. Those I met and spoke to during the inspection were very polite and keen to tell me about their work and how much their teachers help them. All pupils who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire said that they enjoy school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet. All say that they would feel confident to share any worries with a trusted adult. Most pupils think that behaviour is good and bullying is rare. Staff ensure that pupils are able to understand and identify some aspects of prejudice-based behaviour, but not that which relates to sexual orientation or gender identity.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff, governors and everyone who works at the school, including volunteers, are vetted thoroughly. All staff receive regular child protection training to ensure that their knowledge remains current. The staff I spoke with during the inspection had a secure understanding of

what to do if they were worried about a child's welfare or safety or if a child disclosed concerns of a safeguarding nature to them. Your records show that staff are vigilant in passing any concerns they have to you or your deputy safeguarding leader and that these are quickly followed up. Where you have particular concerns about a pupil's safety or well-being, you seek and act upon advice from other professionals. This ensures that you provide good support for vulnerable pupils and their families. Governors have good strategies to check that the school's arrangements for safeguarding work well in practice. For example, governors have visited the school to check how effectively the internet filtering system protects pupils from obscene or harmful content while they are using school technology.

Inspection findings

- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is given a high profile in Reception and key stage 1. All teachers and support staff are trained to teach this aspect of reading and do so very successfully. From Reception onwards, pupils learn new sounds quickly and in ways that are fun and meaningful. Pupils who need help are supported in small groups or individually so that no pupils fall behind. In all phonics sessions, teachers give pupils many opportunities to develop and practise blending and segmenting sounds to read and write. As pupils get older, phonics sessions are often skilfully built around topic work. In Year 2, for example, the 'dg' sound was being reinforced effectively to support pupils' writing of information texts about woodland creatures, such as hedgehogs and badgers.
- The effectiveness of the school's high-quality phonics provision is evident in the school's extremely positive reading results. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children attaining and exceeding the expected standard in reading is consistently above the national average. This is also true in relation to the Year 1 phonics screening check and the statutory end of Year 2 reading assessments. By the time pupils begin key stage 2, their good phonics skills ensure that they are well prepared for learning more advanced reading comprehension skills.
- You have started a process of reviewing the curriculum. Staff have checked the existing content and coverage of different subjects and discussed their suitability with subject leaders. Over the next two years, staff will further develop and redesign the curriculum to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and the school's context. So far, this process has been completed for a small number of subjects. Staff are fully on board but because there are few staff to share subject leadership responsibilities, the process is taking time.
- Your curriculum development plan rightly asks subject leaders to take account of the national curriculum requirements when designing their new programmes of work. The importance of identifying clear intentions about what pupils will know and understand at each stage of their education is inherent in this. However, it is not as clear as is required to guide teachers' planning of subjects beyond English and mathematics. The same is true in relation to how your new curriculum will be implemented to secure pupils' strong progress over time in these subjects and how leaders and teachers will ensure that learning is deeply embedded.

- Pupils' work and displays around the school show that there is a strong focus on teaching pupils about different cultures and religious beliefs. Pupils' comments, such as 'everyone is equal, even if they believe in something else' show the positive effect this work has on pupils' respect for this aspect of diversity and their understanding of equality. Pupils also spoke passionately about the work that Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai has done to secure girls' right to education. Older pupils' work on the justice system, including a visit to a local magistrates' court to take part in a mock trial, gives them a very worthwhile insight to other important aspects of fundamental British values. However, many opportunities within the curriculum to explicitly teach and deepen pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and the full range of diversity in modern Britain are not capitalised upon or planned for.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's curriculum review confirms the essential knowledge and understanding that pupils will gain over time, especially in subjects other than English and mathematics, and how the curriculum will be implemented to achieve this
- there are systems to check how effectively pupils retain and apply the knowledge and skills they have been taught in subjects beyond English and mathematics
- pupils have opportunities to understand and respect the full range of diversity in modern Britain and learn about fundamental British values.

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

Margot D'Arcy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss leaders' and governors' evaluation of the school's work and priorities for improvement. I met with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to other pupils informally at lunchtime. I reviewed a sample of pupils' work. Accompanied by you, I observed teaching, learning and behaviour in all classes. I analysed a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour and governors' work. I held a meeting with three governors and met with a representative of the local authority. I talked to parents informally at the start of the school day. I considered 53 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, including 39 written comments. I took account of 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and 57 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.