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Mr James Bird
Headteacher
Newton Bluecoat Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Bird

Short inspection of Newton Bluecoat Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 2017, 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 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 have developed a strong team ethos among all staff. They work hard and are fully committed to ensuring that pupils prosper. This is a cohesive school.

Newton Bluecoat pupils are happy, behave well, and are very well looked after. They flourish in this encouraging and supportive environment. One of the many strengths of the school is the promotion of pupils' personal development. Pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning, and are caring and considerate. Much of this comes from the culture of high expectations of behaviour and a systematic development of pupils' principled moral code. Pupils also gain broad experiences through an extensive range of enriching activities. You and all staff in the school take great care to ensure that every child has many different opportunities to learn, develop and thrive.

Overall, pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make particularly strong progress in the early years stage and in key stage 1. Although progress in key stage 2 is good, it is not as strong as it is in key stage 1, particularly in English. Pupils have too few opportunities to attain very high standards in subjects other than English and mathematics. Teachers ensure that learning is fun; many of the classrooms and corridors are bright and stimulating.

There are many strengths to the whole leadership team. Governors have a proven record of managing the school very effectively. They are highly supportive of you and other staff. Governors are entirely capable of holding you to account for the continued improvement of the school. You have ensured that there is an excellent caring and learning culture throughout the school. The wider senior leadership team has proved itself to be very proficient in driving improvement where necessary and sustaining high-quality provision where it already exists. Many aspects of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed. However, there is still variability in the outcomes of pupils in English.

Safeguarding is effective.

Records show that the school's approach to safeguarding is well informed and systematic. Leaders know how to work with other agencies to achieve secure safeguarding and know when to make referrals. Pupils trust staff implicitly, so speak to staff confidently when they have concerns. You ensure that staff are well trained. Teachers and other adults know how to identify abuse and how to raise concerns. Recruitment procedures are secure. Pupils' understanding of how to be safe is developed well in the school and pupils can explain how to keep themselves safe. There is little or no bullying in the school. The school's environment is safe, including the very large outdoor area. Governors take safeguarding very seriously and know how to challenge leaders in order to ensure that systems are robust.

Inspection findings

- Pupils in key stage 2 have made good progress consistently, for many years. However, not all groups have made good progress. In 2016, boys did not progress as well as girls did in English. You, other school leaders and teachers responded by reviewing how English was taught, and reading in particular. You have made many improvements, including further training for staff, and you also bought new resources. Unvalidated data shows that boys' achievement in English was much improved in 2017. Girls' progress however, slowed. Unfortunately, the slow progress of both of these groups was only identified at the end of the school year. Not all teachers have been monitoring the progress their pupils have been making with sufficient accuracy. Teachers in key stage 2 are not yet clear enough about the standards required in the new English curriculum.
- The quality of teaching of mathematics has been steadily improving. Teachers are clear about the steps pupils must take to develop their mathematical capability. The fundamentals of mathematics are taught well. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop skills in solving mathematical problems.
- In recent years, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved or attended as well as others in the school. Your drive to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has been successful. Their rates of achievement are similar this year to other pupils in school and their attendance has improved appreciably. You have achieved this through ensuring that there is a much greater focus on these pupils. You have ensured that the achievement and welfare of every disadvantaged pupil is scrutinised closely. You have extended the range of support available to these pupils. This includes additional individual support

sessions for some disadvantaged pupils that take place before the start of the normal school day.

- Children in the early years setting and in key stage 1 make strong progress across the curriculum. As a result, their levels of attainment as they enter key stage 2 are high. Good progress throughout key stage 2 from these high starting points ensures that pupils leave Newton Bluecoat with good levels of literacy and numeracy. This, together with very good attitudes to learning, high standards of behaviour and strong personal development, means that pupils are well prepared for their transition to secondary education.
- Teachers have taught phonics very well for some time. There is an entirely consistent approach applied to teaching phonics from Nursery to the end of Year 2. Teaching assistants are very well trained in the teaching of phonics, and make a major contribution to this success. Pupils leave Year 2 with a first-rate grounding in reading and writing.
- Recently, there has been a focus across school on how best to teach the new mathematics and English curriculums. This has, broadly speaking, been very successful in that achievement in these subjects is good. However, this focused attention on the teaching of English and mathematics has distracted teachers from ensuring that the whole curriculum is covered in depth and to a high standard. There is evidence that some aspects of science, geography and history, for example, are taught well. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding beyond English and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- increase the rate at which pupils in key stage 2 progress by:
 - raising the standards pupils are expected to achieve, particularly in English
 - using the good practice that exists in the school, ensure that all teachers monitor frequently and accurately how well pupils are learning and take rapid action to fill any gaps in their understanding
 - ensuring that pupils cover the required curriculum in all subjects to a high standard.

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 Mackenzie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other members of school staff. I met with five members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority. I spoke to groups of pupils during their breaktimes. School documents were scrutinised, including: safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement, school reviews and improvement plans. I also visited classrooms with you and looked at pupils' work. I examined child protection information. I took account of the 44 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I took account of responses from 16 staff to an inspection survey. I considered the views of 30 parents who texted me their comments.