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Mrs Lynne Sixsmith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sixsmith

Short inspection of St Anne's C of E Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school ethos of 'Minds to learn, hearts to care' appropriately describes the two-pronged approach to learning that you and your staff foster effectively. St Anne's is a caring community where pupils develop a wide range of personal qualities. In their discussions with pupils, staff are caring, considerate and genuinely interested in pupils' stories and opinions. Pupils are extremely polite, well mannered and curious about others and the world.

You provide highly effective leadership. Your long association with the school means that you know the pupils and their parents and carers very well. Staff morale is extremely high. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire Parent View say that the school is well led and managed. The recent appointments you have made to the senior leadership team from within the school are beginning to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy further. They, and other leaders, including governors, are enthusiastic, well informed and united in their actions to enhance the quality of education pupils receive. In this way, the school continues to improve.

The vast majority of governors are new to their role within the last 12 to 18 months. New governors receive effective induction, and more established governors access a wide range of training. For example, governors recently attended training to develop their understanding of pupils' progress information. Governors say that this has developed their understanding of how effective the quality of teaching is in the school. Inspection evidence demonstrates that governors regularly challenge

leaders regarding the effectiveness of their actions on pupils' learning. Minutes of the governing body meetings highlight that governors frequently refer to previous actions and request that leaders provide regular updates regarding new ways of working or initiatives.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics. Between 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics across key stage 2 improved substantially and was well above the national average. Although outcomes in 2018 were not as strong, the vast majority of pupils achieved well in mathematics from their different starting points. You have worked hard to improve teachers' use of practical equipment to support pupils' learning. During the inspection, we both observed teachers using a wide range of resources to emphasise a learning point or capture pupils' imagination. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, we observed pupils using hula-hoops to create a Venn diagram. In Reception, pupils were asked to identify numbers from one to 20 by throwing snowballs at the correct number to demonstrate their understanding. Furthermore, scrutiny of pupils' work highlighted that pupils are now given more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects. Pupils in science were able to construct and interpret a climate graph accurately using the graphical skills they had been taught previously in their mathematics lessons. Consequently, the quality of teaching in mathematics is stronger than at the time of the last inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have a thorough understanding about their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping pupils safe. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are appropriately trained. They and the school chaplain work closely together to ensure that pupils and families who need support, counselling or guidance know who to speak to. Staff are vigilant and know that the safety of pupils is their top priority. Safeguarding documentation, including accident logs, child protection files and referrals, are recorded in an appropriate and timely way. Staff routinely share information or concerns with the local authority.

Pupils feel safe. One pupil reflected the views of many others when saying that the care provided by staff is 'one of the best things about coming to this school'. Another pupil expressed: 'The teachers look after us and help when we are sad.' Pupils know that they can speak to any member of staff if they have a concern or are worried about something. However, a number of pupils say that the school chaplain would be their first port of call.

Pupils learn about a wide range of risks. They have a strong understanding about the benefits and dangers of using the internet and how to stay safe near roads. In discussion, pupils told me about the steps they take in school to stay safe; they know that they are not to enter the forest school area without a teacher or take part in rough play. An anti-bullying pupil group meets regularly; pupil leaders train other pupils to be a 'buddy not a bully'. Pupils are supported at playtime by the

'buddies', who monitor the playground for pupils who may be upset, alone or falling out with friends.

Inspection findings

- The quality of teaching in mathematics, English and science is strong. Typically, teachers plan to meet the needs of pupils from their different starting points, use questioning effectively and encourage pupils to reflect on mistakes from previous learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is well developed, particularly in English. Teaching assistants play an integral role in each lesson, working effectively with the teachers to support individual pupils and small groups. Teaching assistants have a clear role each lesson, are confident to take the lead when needed and are valued for their positive contribution by pupils and teachers. Teachers' high expectations ensure that pupils are motivated and eager to give each piece of work their very best. The standard of presentation in pupils' workbooks is very high. Sometimes, because pupils want to make each piece of work better than the last, they use subject-specific vocabulary to improve their writing. However, across the school, the accuracy of pupils' spelling varies when they attempt to use such unfamiliar language.
- Over time, pupils make less progress in the foundation subjects, such as history and geography, than they do in mathematics, English and science. Although pupils learn about a range of topics, they are not given regular opportunities to investigate each topic in detail before moving on to the next. In this way, pupils often learn the 'what' and 'where' but not the 'why', 'who' or 'how' of these topics.
- Leadership of the early years, including of the newly opened nursery, is helping children to flourish from an early age. Leaders and staff ensure that all statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements are met in the early years. The quality of teaching is highly effective. The learning environment in Nursery and Reception incorporates many colourful and innovative learning opportunities for children to develop their early reading and writing skills. Staff often encourage children to count, make meaningful marks and explain their actions. Children play sensibly together, share and listen attentively to the opinions of others. As a result of this, children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
- The small proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND are well known to staff. Furthermore, staff are trained to identify additional learning needs should pupils present different learning behaviours. In this way, pupils receive swift intervention and support to help them keep in touch with their learning. Leaders have developed strong partnerships with external agencies and professionals. This ensures that pupils with SEND receive specialist support in the school and beyond. As a result of this, pupils with SEND attain well across the school, particularly in their reading and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders should ensure that they:

- develop the curriculum to ensure that pupils are given more opportunities to extend their geographical and historical knowledge, skills and understanding
- improve pupils' spelling accuracy when using unfamiliar, subject-specific vocabulary.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I accompanied senior leaders during observations in classrooms and together we evaluated pupils' learning. I listened to a group of pupils read and spoke to governors, a representative from the local authority, teachers, pupils and parents. I analysed the school's website and evaluated a wide range of additional documentation. This included the record of suitability checks on staff, safeguarding policies and associated files, in addition to attendance records. I reviewed assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress, as well as leaders' action plans and evaluations. I took into account the 33 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. Seven members of staff completed Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.