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Mr L Reynolds
Headteacher
Bilsborrow John Cross Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Reynolds

Short inspection of Bilsborrow John Cross Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 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 as headteacher you have created a forward-thinking, ambitious culture within the school that is focused upon personal and academic outcomes for pupils. You have an accurate, reflective and honest view of the school's strengths and priorities and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, you have correctly focused your attention on enhancing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. These actions have contributed effectively to good teaching, progress and the continuing improvement in the school.

You receive support from a dedicated, experienced and skilful governing body. Governors use their skills, along with additional training, to support them in effectively fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. The governing body is supportive. Governors challenge you appropriately and make a positive contribution towards moving the school forward. The local authority adviser also knows the school well and provides support at an appropriate level.

Leaders have successfully sustained the school's Christian ethos. This is evident in all aspects of school life as is the school's motto of 'believe and achieve'. Pupils are well mannered and display very good attitudes to learning in class. They work sensibly together and settle to tasks quickly. Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and those I spoke to were very supportive of school. Comments from parents included, 'I'm proud my children attend this school with dedicated teachers who care and are attentive.'

Following the last inspection, you were given a number of areas to improve. The first of these was writing across the curriculum. This is an area in which you are taking ongoing action to bring about improvements, as I saw as this was a key focus of this inspection. You were also asked to make pupils aware of their responsibility to improve their work. This has been dealt with effectively. Pupils now have ownership of their learning. This is evident in the way pupils work well together, supporting each other's learning through quality discussions.

During the inspection, we discussed areas where further work is required to support your school improvement. Recent strategies for improvement in writing and mathematics should be embedded to ensure that a greater proportion of middle-ability pupils make accelerated progress. Subject leaders are now in a position to improve learning by sharing the high-quality learning in their subjects across the school. You are aware of these issues and are working very effectively to remedy them.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high standard. Governors comment that, 'safeguarding is at the heart of what we do,' and this is evident in all aspects of safeguarding. Pupils are very happy at school. They say that behaviour is good and they do not think bullying is an issue. The pupils I spoke to know how to keep safe online and in different situations outside of school because of the regular reminders they are given by staff.

Parents receive safeguarding updates through the school website and parental workshops. You also provide support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and liaise closely with outside agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable families and pupils remain safe.

Inspection findings

- We agreed some key areas of focus for this inspection. The first of these was the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes for pupils in mathematics. The subject leader has raised teachers' awareness of the expectations for pupils. Moderation activities and staff development have ensured that there is greater accuracy in the assessment of pupils' mathematics skills. Work on improving pupils' mathematical fluency has also been effective. Individual targets for mathematics are reviewed regularly and this has led to better use of assessment in matching tasks to pupils' needs. Assessment information and progress in pupils' books shows that current pupils make good progress from their starting points. Some pupils make accelerated progress, especially in key stage 2. In key stage 1, more pupils are working towards greater depth; however, a greater proportion of middle-ability pupils could make accelerated progress in mathematics. The leader of mathematics is improving progress but there is further potential to ensure consistency in practice by sharing the high-quality learning evident in key stage 2 mathematics more widely across the school.

- The next area we looked at was how you are improving outcomes in English. Leaders have placed a much higher priority on reading than in previous years and have ensured that there is a wider variety of books now available. Pupils often engage with these more challenging texts because they are enthused by reading more complex books. As a result, they are developing their skills and becoming proficient readers. Your reading assessment information shows that more pupils now achieve greater depth in their learning.
- Your decisive steps are improving pupils' outcomes in writing. Pupils told me they now enjoy writing, which hasn't always been the case. Pupils have increased opportunities to write at length across the curriculum and apply their writing skills across many topics. The high-quality work on the topic of Brazil, for example, has developed pupils' geographical knowledge and their writing skills. As a result of these changes, current pupils make good progress in writing. This was clearly observed in your own assessment information and the progress I observed in pupils' books. As a result, outcomes for the most able pupils at the end of key stage 2 are improving. However, a greater proportion of middle-ability pupils could make accelerated progress in writing.
- The teaching of phonics, spelling, grammar and punctuation is a strength of the school. As a result, in key stage 1 pupils apply their phonics skills to their writing effectively and pupils in key stage 2 choose vocabulary that enables them to elevate the quality of their writing.
- The final area we looked at was how you are improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to help pupils achieve their potential. You and other staff know each of these pupils well and have a clear understanding of the barriers to learning they face. As a result, they make good progress during their time in school. Governors monitor closely how you are spending the pupil premium funding. Consequently, provision is now more clearly matched to pupils' needs. Leaders use assessment information well to target pupils in need of additional support, especially in mathematics. The most recent performance information shows that the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils is diminishing. Work in pupils' books also confirms this to be the case.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to embed the recent strategies for improvement to ensure that a greater proportion of middle-ability pupils make accelerated progress in writing and mathematics
- subject leaders responsible for English and mathematics have more opportunities to share the high-quality learning in their subjects across the school.

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

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector
Information about the inspection

Throughout the inspection I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I held meetings with you and subject leaders to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I also looked at work in pupils' books.

I reviewed documentation which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered 19 responses to Parent View.

I visited classes along with you to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.