

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Lisa Hemingway
Headteacher
St Bridget's CofE School
Brigham
Cockermouth
Cumbria
CA13 0TU

Dear Mrs Hemingway

Short inspection of St Bridget's CofE School

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Alongside your committed team of staff, you have created a caring, nurturing and joyful school that pupils liken to 'one happy family'. Pupils value the benefits that a small and close-knit school community offers. Pupils especially appreciate the bespoke pastoral support that they receive from their teachers. This is because staff foster strong and supportive relationships with pupils, parents and carers.

Parents are extremely loyal to the school. They appreciate that teachers 'treat pupils as individuals'. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. Their views are typified by a response that describes the 'fantastic feel of community and togetherness' that you have established. Staff are equally supportive of the school. They explained to me how you ensure that they benefit from relevant and ongoing training. This is securing improvements in the quality of teaching. For example, staff have worked with teachers in other schools to secure considerable improvements in the teaching of phonics.

The chair of governors shares your vision for the school. He is similarly committed to ensuring that the school is highly inclusive. As a result, many parents choose the school because they know you can meet the social and emotional needs of their children. Governors have a sharp awareness of those aspects of the school that require further development. For example, they understand that leaders' actions to improve mathematics have not been as effective in key stage 2 as in key stage 1 and the early years. Governors know that improvements are ongoing and they ask

pertinent questions of leaders to ensure that action is taken. They routinely hold leaders to account and check the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes. For example, they check that staff training is having a positive effect on pupils' attainment in writing at key stage 1.

You are keen to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve and that pupils make good progress. You do not shy away from addressing weaknesses. At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that teachers check on pupils' progress during learning. Teachers check on pupils' understanding during learning as a matter of routine. They provide appropriate support to ensure that pupils can catch up. For example, leaders' own assessment information and work in pupils' books at key stage 1 show that this is securing better outcomes for pupils in phonics.

At the last inspection, inspectors also asked you to improve outcomes for pupils in mathematics. You have achieved some success in this area. For example, you have worked to embed opportunities for children in the early years to become familiar with number and shape. As a result of this, there have been sustained improvements in the proportion of children who achieve the mathematics early learning goals at the end of the early years.

You have also put in place a whole-school calculation policy and ensure that teachers apply this throughout the school. For example, teachers across the school use a consistent approach to teaching division. Work in pupils' books shows that there have been improvements in outcomes for pupils in mathematics at key stage 1. This is because you have invested in resources to improve the level of challenge in learning, and staff benefit from relevant training. However, although progress is improving in mathematics at key stage 2, developments have been hampered by staffing difficulties.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that the systems in place to safeguard pupils at the school are fit for purpose. There is a suitable system in place to check that adults at the school are safe to work with pupils. Staff receive safeguarding training so that they understand the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders' records of work with external agencies are meticulous.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They are confident that there is an adult in school they can talk to if they have any worries. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in Year 5 value 'bikeability' sessions and pupils in Year 6 learn about the dangers of smoking as part of the personal, social and health curriculum. Pupils across the school show a good understanding of how to stay safe on the internet. They explained to me how they know not to share their personal details online.

Pupils report that incidents of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying, are rare. They are confident that staff will deal with any incidents of bullying effectively. Pupils show respect and tolerance for different types of family and religion. This is

because they celebrate the importance of diversity across the wider curriculum. For instance, pupils learn about Islam in religious education and art.

Inspection findings

- I focused on your actions to improve mathematics. You have improved teaching and resources and the impact is evident in the good progress in early years and key stage 1. Leaders' assessment information shows that an increasing proportion of pupils are working at the standard expected for their age. However, some turbulence in staffing has stalled developments at key stage 2. You have addressed this successfully and, with staffing stability, progress is starting to improve in key stage 2. Nonetheless, inconsistencies in how effectively teachers challenge pupils at key stage 2 remain.
- On occasion, work in pupils' books shows that pupils complete correctly too many similar questions in mathematics. In key stage 2, there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge to more difficult problems. Some pupils lack experience in applying their mathematical skills to unfamiliar situations. As a consequence of this, pupils do not make consistently good progress in mathematics at key stage 2.
- I was keen to learn about the teaching of phonics. This is because, in the past, the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in phonics has been below the national average. You have changed the approach to teaching phonics. This ensures that pupils benefit from a higher level of challenge. You also provide support for parents regarding how they can help their children with phonics at home.
- Effective systems to check on pupils' progress in phonics mean that teachers give appropriate help and support to those pupils who fall behind. This allows pupils to catch up with their peers. In addition, you work with staff in other local schools. This allows staff to share examples of good phonics teaching and further refine their practice. Your efforts are reaping improvements and all pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected standard in phonics this year. Furthermore, teachers' effective support for Year 2 pupils means that all pupils meet the expected standard in phonics by the end of key stage 1.
- I wanted to know about outcomes for pupils in writing at key stage 1. This is because, for the last two years, pupils' attainment in writing has been below the national average. You are incisive in identifying weaknesses in pupils' writing. This means that teachers plan learning that addresses these weaker aspects and pupils make good progress in their writing. Staff have received training to improve the quality of teaching in writing. This includes work with teachers through effective partnerships in a local group of schools.
- Through work with the local authority and other schools you ensure that teachers' assessment in writing is accurate. Effective systems to check on pupils' progress mean that you provide appropriate help for pupils who are falling behind. As a result of these changes, the proportion of pupils at key stage 1 working at the standard expected for their age in writing is increasing.
- Finally, I was also interested to know how you use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils to improve their attendance. This is because rates of

absence for disadvantaged pupils are above the national average. You carefully monitor the attendance of all pupils, including the rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils. This allows you to identify any pupils whose attendance becomes a concern. You use additional funding effectively to ensure that the small number of pupils who have low attendance receive the help and support that they need.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide sufficient challenge and more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to complex problems at key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, a group of five teachers and formally with a group of eight pupils. I spoke with a number of pupils across a range of year groups during social times. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. I met with the school adviser from the local authority and I met formally with chair of governors.

I considered 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I took into account written responses from parents to the Ofsted free-text facility. I scrutinised the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation. I checked on the contents of the school's website.

Leaders accompanied me on visits to classes where I observed teaching and learning across subjects. I looked at work produced by pupils in phonics, mathematics at key stage 2 and writing at key stage 1. I also examined a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and attendance.