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Mr Mark Johns  
Headteacher  
St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School  
The Fairways  
Westhoughton  
Bolton  
BL5 3NZ

Dear Mr Johns

### **Short inspection of St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2016, 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 May 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up the position of substantive headteacher in 2013 you have sustained and built on the school's previous strengths. Your effective and strong leadership is highly valued by the large majority of parents and staff. Members of your staff told me that they consider you to be an 'approachable and inspirational leader'. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well as a team. They are dedicated and share your passion of driving improvements forward at a pace, to ensure that every child achieves to the best of their ability. Any underperformance is dealt with swiftly to ensure that high standards are maintained.

Your school is the hub of the local community. It is affectionately known as St Bart's and has close links with the church. As headteacher, you have created a close-knit family atmosphere which is evident in relationships at all levels. Your school has a strong partnership with parents. Those that I spoke to told me that they 'feel privileged and lucky to be part of this school'. They appreciate your open-door approach and the support they are given to help them develop their children's learning at home. They also commented favourably about the settling in procedures that the school has in place for children starting school life in Reception. Parents are quite rightly pleased with the progress their children are making and with the quality of education that you and your staff provide. The greater than average number of male teaching staff at the school is considered a strength by both parents and pupils.

Learning at your school is fun and reflects the school motto of 'Fun and Achieve'. Displays are informative and vibrant; they show clearly the breadth and balance of the curriculum that is being delivered. Resources are of good quality and enthuse pupils' passion for learning. For example, the Year 2 teacher used innovative resources linked to the theme of witches to deliver a lively and purposeful mathematics lesson on problem solving, which pupils really enjoyed. Behaviour around the school is exemplary. Pupils are unreservedly polite and make visitors to your school feel very welcome.

Since the last inspection you have taken effective action to address the areas identified as needing improvement. Lessons now move at a more brisk pace to ensure that no learning time is wasted. The quality of marking has improved and teachers now give pupils advice on how to improve their work. Pupils are also aware of their targets. You and your staff now give pupils an excellent range of opportunities to develop their information and communication technology skills. Other schools in the local area come to your school to observe this exceptional practice.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

High priority is put on keeping pupils safe. Parents and staff are united in their view that their children are safe at your school. The premises are secure and the identity of visitors to the school is checked. All staff have completed relevant safeguarding training including the 'Prevent' duty. Your staff have all read part one of 'Keeping children safe in education'. As a result, they have a good awareness of safeguarding procedures and talk confidently about extremism and radicalisation. Those responsible for taking a lead role in safeguarding and recruitment have also completed appropriate training. Examples of referrals that I examined during the inspection confirm that staff record concerns well and prompt action is taken to alert outside agencies should the need arise. The single central record meets the required standard.

Pupils have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying, including e-safety. They emphatically told me that bullying is rare and school records confirm this is the case. Visitors to the school, such as the police officer and the paramedic, help develop pupils' awareness of keeping themselves safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- Since your appointment as headteacher you have demonstrated resolve and determination to lead the school on a journey of continuous improvement. You have an accurate overview of the school's many strengths and what it needs to do to improve further. These key priorities are set out clearly in the school development plan with defined procedures for monitoring and evaluation.
- You and your senior leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and you hold teachers to account and support ongoing professional development through an effective performance management system. You and I both agree that the

work of the teaching assistants is not performance-managed with the same rigour.

- Teachers have opportunities to observe best practice within the school and you recognise the importance of providing strategic opportunities for staff to observe best practice at other schools in the locality.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is a real strength of the school. Recent published data highlight that 97% of pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2015. This significant achievement has been commended in a letter to the school by the Department for Education and has been recognised by the local authority as an exemplar of good practice.
- Published data also show that pupils make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics during their time at Key Stage 2. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress in these subjects but not as many pupils as expected reach the higher levels. You have correctly identified this as a key priority for the school. Current school information shows that the strategies that you have put in place are beginning to have some impact. However, from observing lessons, listening to pupils read and looking at pupils' work you agree with me that the most-able pupils are not being consistently challenged.
- Since the removal of levels you and your staff have worked with other schools to implement a new assessment system which covers most subjects being taught in the school. This is helping teachers to show progress in pupils' learning.
- Middle leaders provide you with valuable support and the role of the literacy and numeracy coordinators is well established. However, leaders of the foundation subjects do not have opportunities to observe how well their subjects are being taught throughout the school.
- Your school helps pupils develop a strong appreciation of the arts. Pupils expressed their delight to me at being able to learn to play a selection of musical instruments and participate in a range of dramatic performances, such as their recent involvement in their adaption of the film *Frozen*.
- Pupils also enjoy having a voice in the school and the responsibility that it brings, such as helping to raise money for charitable purposes.
- Governors are highly committed to maintaining high standards in the school and they offer good levels of support and challenge to the school. They know how well pupils are achieving and can talk confidently about the school's priorities.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the most-able pupils in Key Stage 1 are consistently challenged to reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- the role of foundation subject leaders is strengthened by giving them opportunities to observe and monitor the quality of the teaching in the subject for which they are responsible
- the performance management of teaching assistants is rigorously monitored.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I held meetings with the headteacher, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents, staff and pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 to seek their views of the school. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by the headteacher and visited classrooms to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of pupils' work, listened to pupils read and observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the responses to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire, completed by parents, and of the school's own questionnaire to parents and pupils.