

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Alison Baron  
Headteacher  
Blackshaw Primary School  
Bideford Drive  
BRIGHTMET  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
BL2 6TE

Dear Mrs Baron

### **Short inspection of Blackshaw Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 March 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Along with governors and other senior leaders, you have established a culture where everyone strives to ensure that pupils are able to reach their full potential. No one is prepared to sit back and accept the status quo. You have accurately identified areas that can be even better and have planned appropriate actions to tackle these.

A bright and warm environment welcomes pupils and serves to celebrate their hard work, as well as promote their curiosity. A science display in a Key Stage 2 classroom, for instance, encourages pupils to consider how to construct electrical circuits to solve a series of questions. Strong learning throughout the school is underpinned by the well-developed relationships between adults and pupils. Expectations are high, respect is mutual and laughter in classrooms is commonplace as pupils and teachers alike enjoy lessons.

You have addressed the areas identified at the last Ofsted inspection as being in need of improvement. A greater proportion of pupils now reach above-average standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In 2015, at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils achieving these standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined was broadly in line with that seen nationally.

Attainment in writing, particularly for boys, also identified as an area in need of improvement at the previous inspection, has risen so that in 2015 it was above that seen nationally. Nonetheless, the quality of handwriting, while improving in some classes, is not consistently good across the school and needs to remain a focus for improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Almost without exception, pupils say that they feel safe at school, a view echoed by parents in their responses to a number of recent school questionnaires. Enrichment days such as 'safety day' help pupils to develop their understanding of this aspect of the curriculum well. Pupils, for example, are able to explain in depth how to stay safe when they are online or when using social media.

Leaders and governors take their responsibility to keep pupils safe seriously. An audit of all safeguarding procedures is currently taking place. Governors have appropriate oversight of this area of the school's work by sitting on a safeguarding working party. All staff have received appropriate and up-to-date training to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to spot whether any child is at risk of harm.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders are not prepared to rest on their laurels, and display a determination to further improve outcomes for all pupils of the school. A new system to track the achievement of pupils, along with checks of pupils' books and observations of learning, are used effectively to accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Plans for improvement are clear and include appropriate actions to tackle those areas identified as requiring development.
- Leaders' actions ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve. Teachers are robustly held to account for the progress that their pupils make. Training is provided to enhance teachers' skills, where necessary, for example in the teaching of computing.
- You and other senior leaders have demonstrated a good capacity for further improvement. For instance, your actions to improve early years provision have been successful. The standards that children reach have improved for the past two years and are now in line with those seen nationally.
- Teaching and learning in the early years are a significant strength of the school. Both the Nursery and Reception classes bustle with learning. The activities that teachers plan ignite children's interests and fuel their curiosity. Children, for instance, developed their understanding of 'stranger danger' through a fun role-play activity with their teacher, who was dressed as Little Red Riding Hood. Adults use questioning expertly to help children to think more deeply about their learning. During a mathematics activity, for example, the Reception class teacher relentlessly challenged pupils to justify their answers and consequently further their understanding.

- Strong subject knowledge ensures that teachers' explanations are clear, helping pupils to understand their learning. In a Year 5 English lesson, for instance, pupils were able to identify and use subordinate clauses effectively because their teacher carefully introduced the concept.
- Teachers use what they know about previous learning to plan lessons that build on pupils' knowledge and understanding well. In a Year 2 phonics (the sounds that letters make) lesson for instance, pupils' learning moved forward rapidly as their teacher progressively introduced ever greater challenge. In some classes, the most-able pupils are not always challenged as fully as they could be. However, teachers are exploring ways to use the new National Curriculum to best effect for this group of pupils.
- Systems for teachers to judge pupils' achievement against the new National Curriculum are in place. Nonetheless, leaders recognise that further work is needed to fully embed this and ensure that all assessments are accurate.
- Specialist teachers are used to good effect to enhance learning. Pupils in Year 6, for example, enjoyed the challenge of solving algebraic equations following a lesson from a specialist secondary school mathematics teacher. The curriculum is further enhanced through the use of specialist music teachers. Pupils in Key Stage 2 learn how to play a range of instruments, including the violin, drums and guitar.
- Evidence shows that the progress that disadvantaged pupils make is at least in line with that of other pupils in most classes across the school. Leaders use assessment information to track this group of pupils carefully, making sure that the extra funding the school receives is having a positive impact.
- Portfolios of work seen during my inspection demonstrate a diverse and engaging curriculum. Pupils' learning is enhanced through practical activities that fire their enthusiasm. For instance, pupils boosted their historical knowledge by dressing as Ancient Greeks for the day and studying artefacts.
- Pupils' good behaviour is a significant factor in the progress that they make in their lessons. They listen attentively to their teachers and when given the opportunity, work sensibly with one another. Learning, for example, leapt forward in a Year 4 writing lesson when pupils worked together to order fronted adverbials. Pupils say that they value the 'dojo' points that they receive to reward good behaviour as this helps to motivate them.
- 'We respect everyone, no matter how we are different,' was a typical statement from pupils during my visit. Pupils get along well together and state that events throughout the year such as 'friendship week' help them to learn how to be good friends who care for one another.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and use the detailed information that they receive from leaders to evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are not prepared to accept second best and robustly challenge leaders to tackle any identified issues in the school.

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

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers continue to deepen their understanding of the new National Curriculum, so that they are able to use it to the best effect to ensure that all pupils, particularly those who are most able, are challenged fully
- the quality of handwriting improves, so that it is consistently good in all classes.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, the mathematics and English subject leaders, a group of 10 pupils, several members of the governing body, the learning mentor and the staff member responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. I also had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. Documents were scrutinised including: the school development plan; safeguarding checks; minutes of meetings; and records of checks on the quality of teaching. I visited a number of classrooms with you to speak to pupils, look at their books and observe their learning. I also took account of the 25 responses to the online pupil questionnaire as well as responses to the school's own recent parent and pupil questionnaires.