

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 March 2017

Mrs Caroline Johnstone
Headteacher
Little Bollington CofE Primary School
Lymm Road
Little Bollington
Altrincham
Cheshire
WA14 4SZ

Dear Mrs Johnstone

Short inspection of Little Bollington CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 February 2017, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your strong leadership provides clear direction for the school and you share your vision effectively with staff and governors. You have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school because of your improved monitoring, and you use this knowledge well to plan the right actions to bring about improvement. As a result, you have successfully addressed the two areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and the quality of education pupils receive continues to improve.

Since the last inspection, you have improved the quality of boys' writing and reading. Similarly, their engagement in learning has improved. This is because you have developed teachers' skills and improved the quality of teaching through appropriate training. Your review of the curriculum plans has ensured that the topics taught by teachers include those that are of interest to boys. Additional reading books have led to boys' greater engagement in learning.

You have also tackled successfully the area for improvement to develop parents' involvement in their children's learning. There are now greater opportunities for parents' involvement in their children's learning. You provide good opportunities for parents to update their knowledge and understanding of how to help their children learn. These include mathematics workshops about how mathematics concepts, including division and multiplication, are taught. You have also introduced, 'love to

look days' that allow parents to visit the school in action and challenges such as 'get caught reading' that help promote learning at home. Many more parents now attend school events than previously and are more fully engaged in their children's learning.

You were rightly disappointed with the outcomes for pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2016. You have taken swift and effective actions to bring about improvements to teaching through specific training for teachers and teaching assistants in mathematics and writing. You have enabled your staff to visit other schools to learn from high-quality practice and you have sharpened the use of performance management to hold teachers closely to account.

You are aware that there is some variability in the quality of teaching, particularly in lower key stage 2, and are beginning to take appropriate actions to address this. However, you recognise that further work is yet needed to improve the quality of teaching of these year groups so it consistently reflects the most effective practice in school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are secure and are followed diligently. Statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children. All staff receive thorough training on safeguarding and are vigilant about the potential risks pupils may face.

Governors have ensured that appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection, and that pupils are kept safe through effective online safety procedures. Pupils know how to keep safe while in the community and while using technology because of the teaching and guidance they receive, including regular educational visits from the local emergency services.

Inspection findings

- Governors effectively monitor the work of the school. They often ask probing questions to challenge you and ensure that the school continues to improve. Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, based on your comprehensive reports to them. They frequently visit the school to see pupils and staff at work and use these visits well to check the accuracy of the information they receive. Governors regularly check the information they publish on the school's website and retain records of their audits. They respond rapidly to effectively address any issues they identify, including when technical difficulties cause the website to crash. The school's website contains all the required information.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching because they frequently monitor teachers and teaching assistants at work. Leaders frequently check pupils' learning by looking at work in books. Leaders use performance management and other school policies appropriately to hold teachers to account for their work.

- Parents are well informed about the school and overwhelmingly supportive of your work. They receive frequent and informative newsletters and regular texts ensure that they get information quickly. Parents have increased opportunities to see the school at work and learn about how it operates to help their children learn. Parents say that leaders and staff are very approachable, respond quickly and effectively to issues and often 'go the extra mile' to offer support and advice when appropriate.
- Leaders make good use of the support and guidance provided by the diocese and the local authority to check the accuracy of their assessments of pupils' work. They make effective use of opportunities to share assessments with other schools.
- The effectiveness of teaching on learning in most classes is strong. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Most teachers plan learning carefully to systematically build upon pupils' prior knowledge and provide appropriate challenge for the most able. Questioning is used effectively in most classes to check and probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. It encourages pupils to develop their confidence in explaining the reasons for their answers. For example, in one class the teacher rarely gave an answer but expertly crafted her responses in the form of questions that guided pupils to develop effective strategies and arrive at the correct answers themselves. However, pupils' books show that occasionally in lower key stage 2, pupils do not have enough opportunities to take their learning to a greater depth. Current school data and work in pupils' books shows that actions you have put in place are having the desired impact. Pupils' progress is improving rapidly, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6, where approximately eight out of ten pupils are in line with age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders monitor attendance closely, including that of individual groups. Your staff's rapid response to any absence ensures that the reasons why pupils are not in school are quickly established. Robust follow-up of any unauthorised absences, including personal calls from yourself, reinforce the need for pupils to attend regularly. Where attendance has not been high enough without good reason, you quickly inform appropriate authorities and hold parents stringently to account. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved and is in line with the national average. The number of persistent absentees is reducing rapidly. However, you are aware that the attendance of girls, including the proportion of girls who are persistently absent, remains below the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance rates of girls increases to be at least in line with national averages
- teaching in lower key stage 2 provides pupils with more opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding at greater depths in maths, writing and science.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, teaching staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with an adviser from the local authority. I spoke with pupils during lessons and around the school. I took account of the information contained within responses to the online questionnaires for parents and pupils. There were no responses to the staff questionnaire. I met with a group of parents and took account of the letters that some parents had sent to me.

I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, looked at their work in books and listened to some pupils read. I reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and action plans and looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep children safe, recruitment checks and record-keeping.