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Mrs Julie Downing  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Downing

### **Short inspection of Bollington Cross CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 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 July 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide decisive and lucid leadership that puts pupils at the heart of all you do. You are quick to point out that this is made possible because of the unflinching support and commitment of your staff. All work together for the benefit of pupils. The pupils know this and they are thankful. They told me, 'The best thing about Bollington Cross is everything. There are talented teachers, colourful craft, fabulous fiction and superb sports. Never a dull moment at Bollington Cross.'

What makes your leadership effective is that you have a realistic and sharp understanding of where the many strengths lie and the areas in which improvements are needed. The manner in which you address weaknesses is pragmatic.

While pupils attain standards that are higher than national averages across all key stages, the progress made by some is not quick enough. This is especially so for girls. You have analysed why this has been so and have implemented actions to tackle this issue. Already, the differences in progress between boys and girls are narrowing. A parent told me of how her daughter 'starts and finishes the day with an enormous amount of enthusiasm for learning'.

The proportion of pupils working at greater depth should be higher, given their

starting points. Teachers are providing more challenge and you identify and act upon underperformance in a more swift and focused way. Gains are being seen, but there is still some way to go.

Leaders have adopted a simple but practical assessment system that provides you with the information needed to track the progress that pupils are making. This is very well embedded in reading, writing and mathematics. Although you are able to speak convincingly about the quality of provision in other subjects, the tracking and assessment procedures in these subjects are less secure.

You successfully tackled the areas identified for improvement at your last inspection with a head-on attitude. It is no surprise that as a result, the progress pupils now make in reading by the end of key stage 2 is significantly above the national average. Your own assessment information indicates that this positive achievement will be maintained. The most able pupils also make faster progress than their peers do nationally.

Governors are fervent and steadfast in carrying out their responsibilities. They provide a sound and realistic vision for the school, and ensure it happens, by everyone working together and being challenged and supported appropriately. Governors have the necessary skills and experience to be effective in their roles. They take their own professional development seriously and routinely undertake training to keep themselves up to date with recent changes in education policy and practice. The guiding principle of all governors' decisions is 'how will it make a positive difference to pupils?'

Parents, pupils and staff are overwhelmingly positive about your leadership and management. Pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary, and the curriculum is inspiring. As one pupil told me, 'My learning is always improving. The teaching takes us to magical places.' Inspection evidence indicates the school's strong capacity for further improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All policies and practices are up to date and staff receive regular training and support so as to be aware and alert to keeping pupils safe. The checks that leaders undertake on the suitability of adults to work with children are robust. This robustness is evident in the recruitment procedures through to the quality of record-keeping and the involvement with external agencies and parents. Pupils and parents say that this is a safe school.

### **Inspection findings**

- Pupils' attainment is well above the national average across all subjects. However, the progress made by girls and the most able pupils is not fast enough in writing. Teachers are making consistently good use of assessment information to plan and provide activities that meet the needs of girls and the most able pupils. Evidence of impact was seen throughout the inspection. The level of

challenge and depth in mathematics lessons was impressive.

- The progress that the most able pupils make is tracked and analysed with greater precision to ensure that more pupils are working at greater depth. Interventions are timely and precise. Leaders acknowledge that there is still some way to go until these pupils achieve as well as they should. We spoke about the need to embed assessment and tracking procedures in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics.
- Although the proportion of children achieving good levels of development in the early years has consistently been well above the national average, it has been slowly declining. Now that assessment is more accurate it provides a better reflection of children's actual achievement and the decline has now been stemmed. The provision in the early years is enthralling and pupils are ready for key stage 1 with secure foundations and inquisitive minds.
- Prior to the inspection there were aspects of the website that did not meet requirements. Upon my arrival at the school, you provided me with evidence that governors had reviewed and updated all the necessary policies and that governors reviewed the website regularly. There have been issues beyond your control in ensuring that the website was updated and by the time I left these had all been resolved. My meeting with governors and scrutiny of the documentation made very clear that governors fulfil their responsibilities with care and attention.
- Discussions with pupils, parents and staff made it abundantly obvious that this is a happy school. Pupils enjoy coming, as evidenced by their very high rates of attendance. Pupils told me that there is very little, if any, bullying and that everyone is friendly. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and the support and confidence from parents is almost unanimous. At the time of the previous inspection, behaviour and safety were judged to be outstanding and this inspection would indicate that this aspect of the school's provision has also been maintained.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils working at greater depth increases, especially in writing
- the knowledge and understanding of how well pupils achieve in subjects other than English and mathematics are strengthened.

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

Jonathan Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, six members of the governing body and I was able to speak to a representative from the local authority. With you, I conducted a learning walk and visited all classes and had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I also listened to a number of pupils read. I met with a group of pupils during the day, spoke with a number of parents at the school gates and took account of 41 free-text comments. There were 45 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. There were no responses to the online staff questionnaire and no responses to the pupil questionnaire. You provided me with recently undertaken parental and staff surveys, which I took into account. I scrutinised your assessment information, school improvement planning, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.