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6 April 2017

Mrs Emma Bond
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Dear Mrs Bond

Short inspection of Pilsley CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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. The past three years have been turbulent in terms of staffing and leadership, but since returning to your post in March 2016 you have provided stability, clear vision and direction which are enabling the school to rapidly improve. You have built a staff team who have a strong capacity to drive improvement. Areas identified at the last inspection as strengths have been maintained and the school's values, including respect and tolerance, permeate through the community. The genuine warm and caring relationships enable positive learning behaviours from the early years through to Year 6 pupils. Pupils speak fondly about the teaching staff, saying, 'They keep us safe and help us to learn.' They value the importance of their education and feel that the work they are given is both interesting and challenging.

Since the last inspection, leaders have tackled the areas for improvement. A new assessment system and a consistent approach to planning means that work is more closely matched to the ability of the pupils. The new curriculum has enabled a more innovative approach to planning, with motivating and engaging learning opportunities for pupils. Pupils enjoy their topics. They say that 'Learning is fun!' Pupils enjoy the range of clubs, links with the Chatsworth estate, the local church and residential visits that enrich their learning.

Pupils respond well to the support and feedback they receive, which is consistently and effectively given by staff. Pupils are proud of their workbooks and of the

improvement in their presentation. The work in pupils' books confirms that there is a high level of expectation for the quality of work in all subjects. There are more opportunities for pupils to work independently and make decisions about their own learning.

Significant progress has been made in the teaching of phonics and spelling in key stage 1 but progress towards this development area has been slower in key stage 2. You have correctly identified where to concentrate resources to bring about improvement. The school is now making progress towards improving the teaching of mathematics, as well as improving the quality of spelling and use of grammar in key stage 2. Leaders acknowledge that both areas remain a priority for further development and that there is still work to be done.

You lead the school in a calm and purposeful manner but with a steely determination to get things done. You know every child well and genuinely care for the welfare of the whole community. In September 2016, you reorganised the staffing in order to utilise the strengths and expertise of the teachers to best effect. Through providing middle leaders with effective professional development, you ensure that there is a consistent approach to learning and teaching throughout the school. You target support for any member of staff that needs it in order to help them improve their practice. This has resulted in classrooms being calm, purposeful and positive learning environments where pupils work together well to assist each other with their learning. Expectations of learning are high and pupils know they need to work hard; 'You can't be lazy!' stated one Year 6 pupil. Pupils speak politely and with confidence, are respectful to adults and can clearly explain what and how they are learning. They understand the benefit of making mistakes but they are willing to persevere until they get things right.

The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors are committed to helping you drive improvement, against the school priorities, effectively using their expertise. They have a comprehensive understanding of their strategic role. Their regular visits, along with the detailed information you give them, enable them to gain a good understanding of progress towards school priorities, to challenge you effectively and to hold the leadership team to account.

Parents are very positive about the school. During my visit, they were keen to ensure that I understood how pleased they are with the academic and pastoral care afforded to their children. They have trust in the staff, believe the school has a happy atmosphere, are confident that staff deal with concerns sensitively and know their children well. The responses on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, along with the school's own parent survey in 2016 showed that, almost without exception, parents would recommend the school to others.

You have written a detailed self-evaluation highlighting the key strengths of the school, and including the strategies and initiatives used to tackle areas for improvement, and you have not been afraid to try different methods to address them. You are clear about where the school needs to raise standards and have plans which are regularly reviewed to secure sustained progress. You have effectively used

the expertise from the local authority and diocese to support you in planning the next steps.

Regular meetings between teachers ensure that pupil progress is carefully monitored and immediate intervention and support is given to individuals who are not making expected progress. Current assessment information is positive, indicating that the majority of pupils are making good progress across the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a vigilant culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff and governors understand their responsibilities to ensure the safety of the pupils. The leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and arrangements are of a high standard. You and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding regularly review the school's safeguarding arrangements in order to ensure that this remains the case. You are well supported by the school's administrator to ensure that staff recruitment and vetting procedures are meticulous. The introduction of the 'Grab Bag', containing everything you need to contact parents in the case of an evacuation, is an example of how you have changed practice in order to make systems more effective and efficient. Child protection records are appropriately detailed and of a good quality. They demonstrate that referrals are made immediately to external agencies, such as social care, when this is required.

You have ensured that staff and governors are trained well and are knowledgeable about the signs and symptoms of potential abuse, including areas such as radicalisation and extremism. All staff are trained to administer paediatric first aid. Pupils I met during my visit told me there is no bullying in school. They said that they sometimes fall out but forgive each other and mostly get on really well because, as one pupil explained, 'We are like a big family.' They appreciate the visits from the emergency services because, for example, they are helped to feel more confident about what to do if there was a fire in school or at home. Pupils are clear about how to stay safe online. Staff, pupils and families react swiftly and positively to resolve any issues that may occur.

Inspection findings

- Pupil outcomes in phonics and spelling have significantly improved in key stage 1 over the past three years and the introduction of 15 minutes of daily spelling practice in key stage 2 is reaping benefits. You recognise there is still room for improvement as teachers need to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to apply their spelling and grammar skills across the curriculum.
- Pupil outcomes, particularly for middle-ability pupils, fell at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. Progress was below the national averages for reading and mathematics across the school. This was because there had been inconsistent teaching by a number of different teachers, which meant that there were gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge as well as underdeveloped learning behaviours. You have identified the reasons for this dip in progress. The measures you have put in place

have successfully improved the quality of teaching which is now resulting in good progress for pupils throughout the school.

- You have tackled the decline in progress in mathematics effectively. You have introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics and provided training for all staff to improve their skills in teaching this subject. This has led to a significant improvement in the pupils' knowledge. While pupils are able to calculate, and use numbers effectively, they do not always have a deep understanding of mathematics because teachers do not routinely give them enough opportunities to apply what they know. The leadership team has identified that more opportunities to develop mathematical thinking through problem-solving and reasoning activities are needed in order to better promote mathematical fluency.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is above the national average. However, you remain vigilant and should a pupil's attendance become a cause for concern, you provide intensive support for pupils and families in order to remedy the matter. The majority of pupils come to school, as described by their parents as 'skipping and dancing'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to practise and utilise their problem-solving and reasoning skills in order to develop mathematical fluency
- teachers provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to incorporate spelling, punctuation and grammar accurately as they write across a range of subjects in order to improve their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Nash
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we discussed your self-evaluation and I shared my key lines of enquiry. I met with four members of staff, three governors, including the chair, a group of pupils, parents and a representative from the diocese. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I considered the responses of parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's most recent questionnaire to parents. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. I visited all classes in the school, spending a short time in each. I looked at a wide range of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders'

evaluation of the school's current performance and plans for improvement. I considered evidence and records relating to safeguarding, assessment information, attendance and how the pupil premium funding is spent. I examined the school's website to check that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information. I analysed the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.