

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Ann Townshend
Headteacher
St Barnabas' CofE Primary School
St Barnabas Street
Pimlico
London
SW1W 8PF

Dear Ms Townshend

Short inspection of St Barnabas' CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 previous inspection. You have nurtured a strong and caring school community where all pupils are respected equally. The needs and interests of pupils are at the heart of each key decision made.

You have taken some ambitious decisions on how to use the school's resources to achieve this. The investment in additional 'link teachers' is working well. They provide good support for disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language, making sure they achieve well. They also give intensive support to the high number of pupils who join the school part-way through the year, so avoiding any disruption in their learning. With the support of governors, you use music and sport professionals to broaden the curriculum and to ensure high-quality teaching. This has been successful. Pupils achieve high standards across the arts, particularly in music, where they sing with good control of tune and rhythm. Teachers provide many opportunities for children who speak English as an additional language to reinforce language when they play or work independently. Through a rich and varied curriculum, pupils enjoy learning and are motivated to do well. They value the broad range of interesting learning opportunities provided for them.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and those areas that need further improvement. Pupils make good progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics, but there are inconsistencies in the quality of challenge in some

classes, particularly for the most able pupils. There is further work to do to ensure that teaching typically challenges pupils to achieve to the best of their abilities. You have clear plans in place to tackle this, including how you will overcome the challenges presented by staffing changes and fluctuation in pupil numbers. Governors actively challenge and support you. They have great confidence in senior leaders to continue to improve pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders and governors ensure that staff and volunteers are appropriately vetted. Governors commissioned an external audit of safeguarding procedures in the school last year. This is typical of a desire to be continually reviewing and improving the way pupils are looked after at the school. A comprehensive school safeguarding policy is supported with regular updates for staff to make sure the school's procedures are followed well. Risk assessments are thorough and kept under review, as shown, for example, by the careful management of visits into central London. Where concerns arise about pupils, senior leaders manage these well with swift and comprehensive referrals made to external agencies. You maintain good lines of communication with all agencies involved.

Pupils are very confident that the school is a safe place and that the adults in the school are 'looking out' for them all the time. When asked about behaviour, one pupil said: 'There is no bullying at the school. If anything ever did happen, the teachers would be on to it straight away. They really look after us.' Several other pupils pointed out the four simple rules of the school, including only to 'use kind words and actions'. As one pupil said: 'We all know these and they are simple to remember; we all follow them.' Pupils have a good knowledge of how to protect themselves and keep safe when working with computers. Behaviour is very good in lessons and pupils play safely in the playground.

Inspection findings

- My first focus for the inspection was to review how well leaders are ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of phonics by the end of Year 2 and make good progress in reading through key stage 2. Pupils achieved below-average results in the 2016 national phonics assessments for Year 1 pupils. National assessments for Year 6 pupils in 2016 indicated a fall in the rates of progress made by pupils in reading compared with previous years.
- Senior leaders implemented clear and effective actions to improve reading following the results of national assessments in 2016. Good work has taken place to improve the teaching of phonics. Teachers are knowledgeable and teach phonics well. They group pupils by attainment to focus their phonics teaching on the reading needs of individual pupils. This is successful. Pupils' achievement in phonics has improved this year and they use their knowledge of phonics well to read independently. Teachers throughout key stage 2 provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their reading comprehension skills. They encourage

pupils to answer questions about a text and to summarise what they have read. Teachers draw on a good range of carefully chosen books to encourage discussion and to ensure that pupils understand what is happening in the stories. However, high-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the questions posed to them. A very strong link exists with the library at a local independent high school, so enabling pupils to extend their reading skills with specialist support. This captures pupils' interest and encourages them to discuss and debate ideas on the books they have read. As one pupil said: 'It always makes me want to read on at home and get ready for the next visit.'

- However, as they begin to read independently, many younger pupils who speak English as an additional language struggle to understand the meaning of the new and unfamiliar words that they encounter in some reading books. This gap in vocabulary sometimes goes unchecked as teachers do not always explore the new words and phrases sufficiently with pupils to make sure they understand what they are reading.
- Another focus of the inspection was to evaluate leaders' work to ensure that children, particularly the most able children, are making good progress in mathematics through the early years. Although achievement in the early years has improved overall in recent years, children's achievement in mathematics has fallen at the end of the Reception Year.
- Teachers work together effectively to plan and teach mathematics well in the early years. Children are taught mathematics in small groups to develop their understanding of patterns and the addition and subtraction of numbers. Achievement in mathematics is improving. However, opportunities for children to explore mathematics and reinforce mathematical language or knowledge of shapes as they play together are inconsistent.
- A final focus of the inspection was to review how the curriculum is providing breadth for pupils and ensuring that they achieve well across all subjects. Governors have invested in projects to enhance the quality and depth of curriculum opportunities. However, curriculum information for parents on the school website is limited.
- You have a strong vision to provide a curriculum that enriches pupils' learning and helps them to make good progress across all subjects. Leaders implement this vision effectively. The curriculum draws upon the rich cultural and environmental resources of central London. It is successfully motivating pupils and helping them to understand and value their local community. Visits to local gardens, museums and art galleries allow pupils to experience learning directly from the specialist gardeners and curators they work with. You complement this by strengthening links with other schools and organisations, and by funding specialist provision in sports and music.
- The outcome is a curriculum which motivates pupils to learn. They not only develop a breadth of knowledge in the subjects they study, but a deep understanding which helps them achieve well. They learn about fundamental British values and equal opportunities through the curriculum, showing deep respect for diversity and for each other and becoming 'well-rounded' citizens. As a result, the curriculum prepares pupils very well for their next stage of

education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching supports pupils, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, to develop the broad and rich vocabulary they need to achieve the highest standards in their reading
- teaching and learning are consistently good for all pupils, particularly the most able, across all classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Wagstaff
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I had discussions with the senior leaders and governors about the actions they have taken to improve the school and to ensure that pupils are safe. I spoke with the leader responsible for the early years. Together with senior leaders, I visited classes across the school. I spoke with pupils and looked at their work. Some pupils in key stage 2 read to me. I observed pupils' learning in music and Latin. I observed some additional curriculum enrichment activities taking place. I analysed a range of school documents linked to the school's self-evaluation and improvement priorities. I reviewed safeguarding files and school risk assessments. I spoke with representatives of the local authority and the London Diocesan Board for Schools. The six responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were reviewed, as were the eight responses to the staff questionnaire. Additional responses to parent questionnaires organised by the school were also analysed.