

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Garth Hicks
Executive Headteacher
Bucknall Primary School
Main Street
Bucknall
Woodhall Spa
Lincolnshire
LN10 5DT

Dear Mr Hicks

Short inspection of Bucknall Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment in September 2017, you have continued the good improvement work carried out by the local authority. You have addressed head-on the long-standing issues you inherited. For example, prior to your appointment, there had been several temporary headteachers as a result of recruitment difficulties. With the support of the Kyra Teaching School Alliance and the local authority, you have established a united team of staff and managed necessary improvements well.

Bucknall Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. It is a welcoming, friendly environment where staff work closely together. You and your team have ensured that pupils are well cared for and enjoy their learning. As a result, pupils are happy and parents and carers are supportive. Parents speak highly of the care and quality of education their children receive. As one parent commented:

'My children feel safe and secure at this school. They are able to express themselves freely and without judgement. I could not be happier with their education and development.'

Staff have created a positive, nurturing environment for learning through calm,

well-lit spaces and stimulating displays. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school. They are respectful, pay close attention in class and behave very well. Consequently, pupils are enthusiastic and aspirational learners. For example, one pupil told me, 'I love art lessons. My dream job is to be an artist.' Another pupil told me about her recent science lesson investigating electrical conductors and insulators. She explained that learning about science was important because she wanted 'more than anything, to be a doctor'.

Since your appointment as executive headteacher, you have quickly got to know the strengths and areas to develop within the school. You have worked successfully with the local authority to develop clear strategic plans for what is required to shape and drive the future of the school. The school's self-evaluation accurately informs policies, actions and staff training.

The governing body provides you with effective support and challenge. Governors are knowledgeable and regularly check the actions taken by leaders to secure improvements. Governors have benefited from highly effective training from a national leader of governance and, as a result, fulfil their strategic role well. Governors have a particular focus on pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and on disadvantaged pupils. They understand their responsibility to ensure that funding for these pupils is used effectively.

School leaders have dealt effectively with the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers plan mathematics lessons that challenge and extend pupils' learning. Pupils say that they understand what they are learning and teachers provide them with precise steps to be successful in their learning. Improved teaching strategies have ensured that pupils are more consistently challenged in mathematics, although you acknowledge that this can be improved even further for some pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that there is a good culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff and governors keep up to date with training. They know what to do to keep pupils safe. You and the family support worker work well with families and refer concerns in a timely manner. Staff are vigilant and are prepared to take decisive and prompt action, when needed, to secure pupils' well-being. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils are happy and safe in school. They say that poor behaviour and bullying are very rare but, when they do occur, staff resolve issues promptly. Pupils feel well cared for by staff in school. They are taught about potential risks and how to stay safe in different situations. These include how to use the internet safely and the danger from strangers.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes in the leadership of the school. Prior to your appointment as executive headteacher, the local authority and the Kyra Teaching School Alliance provided effective, good-quality training for staff and governors. As a result, pupils have continued to achieve at least well and leaders are ambitious for the future of the school.
- You are also headteacher at Bardney Church of England and Methodist Primary School. You identified that staff at Bucknall Primary School would benefit from working more closely with colleagues from Bardney. For example, you recognised that the quality of middle leadership needed to improve. It was clear during this inspection that shared subject leadership with colleagues across the two schools has led to significant improvements in the quality of subject leadership. Consequently, leaders feel that they have improved in confidence and have a clear, strategic vision for further improvements, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Since you joined the school in September 2017, you have continued to drive improvements in teaching and learning. Your introduction of a new system to check the progress of pupils has enabled teachers and leaders to more precisely plan next steps for individuals and groups of pupils.
- You have ambitious plans for the school. You feel that your headship of two schools will be very beneficial for Bucknall Primary School. This is because staff are able to share training, expertise and planning. As a result, this has already shown improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funding the school receives. They provide extra teaching to individuals and small groups. This, along with the work of the coordinator of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the family support worker, is having a positive impact on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The school's information shows that these pupils make similar overall progress to other pupils in the school. Sometimes they make faster progress. The small number of pupils, however, means that attainment is not consistent in all year groups.
- Very small and varied cohorts in different year groups make year-on-year comparisons of pupils' attainment difficult. You carefully track groups of pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, to ensure that their progress is at least good.
- Pupils' work in their English and mathematics books is of a good standard. However, this is not consistent in other subjects. Leaders have not yet ensured that teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Leaders reviewed the teaching and learning of mathematics to ensure a consistent approach across the school. As a result, pupils, particularly the most able pupils, are consistently challenged to extend and deepen their thinking. Nevertheless, teachers' expectations for what pupils can achieve are not as high as they could be.

- School leaders have taken successful steps to raise standards in writing. Pupils have regular opportunities to write for different purposes and, from a young age, are developing an increasingly secure understanding of grammar. However, teachers' expectations for pupils' work are not consistently high enough to ensure that more pupils are working at a greater depth of understanding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics is carefully monitored to ensure consistently high standards across the curriculum
- teachers have consistently high expectations for the achievement of pupils in writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the family support worker and senior and middle leaders. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and I met with a group of pupils. I met with four members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

We visited classrooms together and I looked at a range of pupils' work. We discussed the progress of different groups of pupils and the school's plans for improvement. I considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the responses of staff to Ofsted's online survey for them. There were no responses to the pupils' survey. I scrutinised evidence from a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance, procedures and records for safeguarding and behaviour, information on how the pupil premium is spent, an analysis of attendance and a number of policy documents. I examined the school's recently updated website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, on the playground and during lunchtime.