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Mrs Ann Gray  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Gray

### **Short inspection of Bishop Martin Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 at the school since the last inspection. With the support of your staff team, you have established a successful and nurturing school where pupils' care, guidance and support are given the highest priority. The school's mission statement, 'Inspire, Enjoy, Achieve', accurately captures your high aspirations, which you share with staff and governors, for pupils and the community the school serves.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' attainment has improved steadily, particularly in reading and mathematics. Although most children start at the school with skills and abilities which are generally below those typically found, by the time they leave Year 6 most pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have made strong progress and achieve well. This reflects the strong leadership that you provide and the effective teaching evident across the school as seen during this inspection.

Parents and carers are fully supportive of your leadership and are rightly proud of the school. They are appreciative of the quality of education that their children receive and the pastoral support that staff provide. The school's high standards of care are also reflected in the building and grounds. Both the indoor and outdoor environments are extremely well maintained. The many excellent displays of writing and art work, in classrooms and corridors, show how highly pupils' work is valued and celebrated at the school.

At the previous inspection you were asked to ensure that pupils receive more opportunities to write across the wider curriculum. You were also asked to develop the role of subject leaders in checking that pupils are learning effectively in each subject area. The work seen in pupils' books, during this inspection, shows that they are benefiting from a broad curriculum. I saw many examples of pupils given opportunities to develop their writing skills in subjects such as science and history. However, you recognise that pupils are capable of achieving even higher standards in the wider curriculum. You have good plans in place to build on the improvements that have been made in this area by further developing the role of subject leaders, many of whom are new to their role.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding at Bishop Martin, and ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As a result, pupils feel safe and are well looked after. They develop excellent relationships with staff and fellow pupils alike. Staff are vigilant in carrying out their safeguarding duties. They know their pupils well and, if they have any concerns, they follow the school's safeguarding policy and share relevant information immediately with the relevant person. The pupils with whom I spoke during this inspection told me that they feel safe and well looked after at school.

School leaders work closely with external agencies, where necessary, to provide support to pupils and their families. Parents are highly appreciative of your commitment to pupils' welfare, and the support you provide for families. This was captured in one of the comments from a parent, following a period of disruption to family life, who wrote: 'Not only have you shown care and inspiration to the children but also to the whole family unit.'

### **Inspection findings**

- During this short inspection I focused on pupils' attendance, because it has been below the national average for the past two years. I looked closely at the progress children are making in the early years, and considered whether the improvements that have been made in reading, writing and mathematics, as reflected in the 2017 end of key stage 2 assessments, have been sustained. I also looked at the quality of pupils' work in the wider curriculum, and how well governors provide support and challenge to school leaders.
- Senior leaders have made improving attendance one of the school's key priorities. Attendance figures regularly feature prominently in newsletters and displays around school. Staff celebrate good attendance and ensure that parents understand the negative impact absence can have on pupils' progress. Staff ensure that all absences are followed up and immediately contact parents if any unexplained absences occur. There is clear evidence that this work has been successful, with additional support resulting in improved attendance for many pupils. However, leaders are fully aware that further reducing absence remains a key challenge for the school, because attendance remains below the national average.

- Staff in the early years ensure that children settle in well and get off to a good start to their school life. Children enjoy playing with their friends and quickly learn to follow the school's routines. Staff have created a highly stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outside, which they use to provide a wide range of learning opportunities for children across all areas of learning. As a result, children develop extremely positive attitudes to learning and many make good progress. Staff make regular observations of children and keep detailed records of their development. However, better use could be made of these assessments to move children's learning on at an even faster rate, particularly in the areas of writing and mathematics.
- Reading is a strength of the school's work. Although results in the national phonics screening check over the past two years have been slightly below the national average, teachers ensure that pupils who struggle to develop their early reading skills receive effective support. As a result, these pupils make good progress and the vast majority develop into competent readers. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of books and authors during their time at the school and older pupils read widely and often. The 2017 key stage 2 external assessment results showed that pupils made excellent progress. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was above the national average. The proportion judged to be working at greater depth was significantly above the national average. Pupils also make good progress in writing and this was evident in the work seen in books, as well as the standards achieved at the end of key stage 2.
- Over the past year, a strong and effective focus on improving the teaching of mathematics has led to steady improvements to pupils' achievement in this subject. Pupils enjoy the challenge that teachers provide in mathematics lessons. The work in their books shows that they are given regular opportunities to use and apply their knowledge of mathematics to solve problems. There are clear signs that pupils are now making stronger progress. The improvements that have been made were reflected in the end of key stage 2 results in 2017. Pupils made good progress across key stage 2 and the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in mathematics was above the national average.
- The school provides pupils with regular opportunities to learn across a broad range of subjects. This makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy art and the wide range of sports that they experience both during lessons and in after-school clubs. However, the progress pupils make in science, history and geography is not as good as it should be. Too often, errors and misconceptions are not challenged and pupils' learning in these subjects is limited as a result.
- Governance is strong. The governing body is highly effective and provides a good level of support and challenge to school leaders. Governors understand their role and know the school well. They visit the school regularly and staff provide them with a good range of information about different aspects of the school's work. Governors keep a good overview of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils and help to ensure that all procedures and practices are

robust and reflect current requirements. The governing body has also ensured that there are good transition arrangements in place for the new headteacher to take up his post when the current headteacher retires at the end of this term.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more children reach a good level of development at the end of the early years by making better use of assessment to plan learning that challenges children, particularly in writing and mathematics
- further improvements are made to pupils' rates of attendance
- a greater level of challenge is provided in geography, history and science lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I held meetings with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. I also met with the subject leader for English and the early years leader. I had a meeting with the pastoral manager and met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with two local authority advisers. I visited all classrooms with school leaders to observe teaching and learning. I spent time looking at the quality of work in pupils' books and listened to some pupils read. I spoke with a group of Year 6 pupils about various aspects of school life and observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and dinner time. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I also looked at records relating to teachers' appraisal. I took account of the 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and results of the school's own surveys.