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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



28 February 2018

Mrs Penny Watkin
Headteacher
Barlow Church of England Primary School
Millcross Lane
Barlow
Dronfield
Derbyshire
S18 7TA

Dear Mrs Watkin

Short inspection of Barlow Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 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 July 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Under your leadership, you and the other staff have created a positive atmosphere for learning. Your school has a caring, inclusive ethos, where every pupil is valued as an individual. Staff who responded to their questionnaire say they enjoy their work and feel well supported. They are proud to be part of the school.

You have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the self-evaluation document is not always precise enough and lacks up-to-date supporting evidence. The improvement plans lack rigour and targets do not focus on how well the pupils make progress. This makes it difficult for governors to decide if the plans are ambitious enough and whether you have been successful in achieving the targets.

Pupils are extremely polite and enjoy coming to school. Pupils told me about the school's five core values of respect, responsibility, truthfulness, teamwork and perseverance. Pupils told me that, this half term, they will receive a certificate in the weekly 'star' assembly if they persevere at an activity particularly well. Overall, pupils' attendance is above the national average.

Pupils describe the behaviour at school as 'really good'. I did not observe any poor

behaviour during the inspection and the school's records confirm this to be typical. Pupils are confident that teachers deal with any poor behaviour. All staff, parents and carers agree that this is the case. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and they do not distract each other from their work. They have good relationships with their teachers and each other and describe the school as inclusive. They explained how teachers give new pupils two 'buddies' to help them settle in.

The large majority of parents are supportive of the school and say that staff teach their children well. Parents who made their views known believe that their children are well looked after. Many parents feel that their children's needs are met. A minority of parents feel that you could be more open in responding to their concerns and providing information about their children's progress.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to clarify the responsibilities of staff with subject and other leadership roles. You have strengthened staff leadership roles. Leaders are accountable for their areas of extra responsibility through their action plans. They have introduced a range of strategies, for example new resources to improve reading outcomes. However, staff do not check the impact of the new strategies thoroughly enough to see if they are improving pupils' progress.

Another recommendation from the last inspection was that teachers should closely check the progress of the most able pupils so that their learning is moved on quickly. In 2017, too few pupils achieved the higher standard in reading and writing by the end of key stage 1. Key stage 2 pupils' progress in mathematics was well below average. Current assessment information indicates that pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is inconsistent. Some pupils say they find the work in lessons too easy. One parent commented, 'I often think the children are not challenged enough'. When we visited lessons and looked in pupils' workbooks, teachers were not consistently challenging the pupils to achieve at the higher levels. Your own self-evaluation agrees that the most able pupils, in particular, are not progressing as well as they should.

The last inspection identified the need to ensure that pupils respond to teachers' feedback to improve their work. You have introduced a new 'marking code'. Recent work scrutinies show that there are still inconsistencies in how staff apply the code and, therefore, in the extent to which it is helping pupils to make progress. This area remains an issue for the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils said they feel safe at school and staff and parents agree. Pupils know how to stay safe and they are aware of the potential dangers posed by the internet. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were discussing whether 'the internet has made the world a better place' when we visited their class. Pupils enjoy visits of staff from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, who teach them how to keep themselves safe. They also receive guidance about the benefits and dangers of drugs. Pupils report that bullying is very rare. They know they can talk to someone if it should occur and are confident that teachers would resolve the bullying.

Staff know how to raise a concern about a pupil's welfare, including any issues involving extremism and radicalisation. You are currently ensuring that all staff and governors have received their annual training. You call upon external support for parents where this may be helpful. Leaders make appropriate employment checks on all staff and records of these checks are thorough. You are making sure that record-keeping in the pupils' files is up to date and that you have completed the planned safeguarding audit in full.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, the most able pupils in key stage 2 made progress in their writing that was above the national average. Their progress in reading and mathematics was below the national average. You have identified improving pupils' progress in reading and mathematics as a priority on the school improvement plan, including those pupils who are the most able.
- Leaders have introduced new reading resources to improve pupils' vocabulary and their comprehension skills. Pupils who I heard read did so with confidence, using their phonics skills to help them to recognise words. These pupils said that they enjoy reading at home. Current information shows that an increased proportion of pupils are on track to reach expected and higher levels of attainment in reading.
- Most pupils engage well during lessons and want to contribute their ideas. In lessons that we observed together, including phonics and mathematics, we saw some effective teamwork between the teacher and the teaching assistant, with good support for those pupils who were struggling. Teachers did not move the learning of the most able pupils on fast enough or provide these pupils with sufficient challenge.
- Leaders have identified new resources, including online materials, to improve pupils' learning experiences. However, leaders do not analyse the impact of the new resources and, therefore, do not know if they are helping the pupils to make more rapid progress.
- Leaders have recently taken action to improve pupils' progress in mathematics. However, work in pupils' books shows that pupils are not yet showing sustained improvements in their mathematical skills and understanding. Teachers do not regularly challenge the most able pupils to complete more difficult questions. Pupils' current progress in mathematics is not consistent in all year groups.
- The school receives additional government funding for the small proportion of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders do not have a clear enough view of the impact this extra funding. They are therefore unable to amend plans to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Governors cannot hold you to account for the progress these pupils make.
- The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. Parents and pupils are enthusiastic about the range of extra-curricular activities available. Pupils described activities such as forest school, learning to play the trombone and representing the school at sporting events, such as basketball and boccia.

Pupils also appreciate and enjoy the positions of responsibility they can hold in the school, for example having a place on the school council or the eco-committee.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. They show an understanding and acceptance of other cultures and faiths. For example, pupils I spoke with could explain the significance of Ramadan and I observed collective worship which celebrated Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish festival of trees. Pupils are considerate, thoughtful and respectful of others.
- Governors understand their responsibilities. They are taking a more active role within the school community than in the past. They know that not all pupils are making the progress that they should. Governors are becoming increasingly skilled at offering you support and asking pertinent questions to hold you to account.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide pupils with a greater degree of challenge so that more pupils are able to achieve the higher standard in mathematics at key stage 2
- teachers apply the school's 'marking code' consistently, so that pupils know what they need to do to improve
- extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is closely monitored in order to evaluate the impact of its use accurately and modify future actions accordingly
- the school improvement plan has measurable success criteria, including pupils' progress, by which governors can judge if actions taken to improve the school have been successful.

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

Rachel Tordoff
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited five classes with you to observe pupils' learning. I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks with you, as well as looking at pupils' workbooks when we visited the classes. I spoke with a group of pupils and I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and during lessons. I also listened to some pupils read.

I met with you and I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with the leaders of literacy, mathematics and the early years.

I evaluated a range of information, including the school's self-evaluation documents, the school's improvement plan and action plans for different subjects. I also reviewed documents relating to safeguarding, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's use of pupil premium and sport funding and information relating to pupils' achievement and attendance, as well as a selection of school policies.

I met a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day. I took into account the 39 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 23 comments. I also considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils and the six responses to the questionnaire for staff.