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Mrs L Hazeldine  
Headteacher  
Bidston Village CofE (Controlled) Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Hazeldine

### **Short inspection of Bidston Village CofE (Controlled) Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 June 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There is a friendly welcome for all who arrive. Your pupils are happy, enjoy learning and behave extremely well. This is because pupils know that you and your staff value them and believe in them. Leaders' high expectations are shared by staff and governors. This has played a crucial role in accelerating the rate of improvement across the school. You understand the strengths of your school well and have identified the key actions needed to improve it further. Governors have a range of skills and experience. They are proficient at analysing the information you give to them, especially that concerning achievement, attendance and finance.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are made to feel welcome. The on-site resourced provision is a strength of the school. In these very nurturing environments, staff provide personalised support in order to meet pupils' specific needs. They identify the ongoing barriers to learning and put in place measures to accelerate the progress that pupils make in their learning.

All the parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and those I spoke to in the morning would recommend the school. One comment summed up the positive responses: 'This is an excellent school with teachers who are kind and compassionate, often going beyond what you would normally expect in order to make my children feel happy and secure. I would strongly recommend this school to a fellow parent.' Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils that I spoke to said that senior leaders are kind and caring and look after them. One comment summed

up the ethos of the school: 'Our school is special, it's a Christian school and we respect everyone for who they are.'

At your last inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils are sufficiently challenged in their learning. Staff now challenge pupils very well across the school as a result of a new, consistent approach to learning. The work given to the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, is beginning to extend their thinking. As a result, the school's assessment information shows that progress for the most able pupils is improving. However, you recognise that too few pupils exceed the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage. Another area for improvement at the last inspection was writing. You have also highlighted the achievement of pupils in this and other aspects of English as an area for further improvement. This formed a key line of enquiry for this inspection.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. You acknowledged that, although teachers challenge pupils more, teaching should ensure that a greater proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage. While the teaching of phonics is improving, we agreed that you should continue to evaluate its effectiveness to ensure a consistently high standard. We also agreed that there is more to do to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff meticulously record any concerns that arise about pupils' welfare. Records are detailed and show that leaders quickly follow up any concerns. They liaise promptly with other agencies as required. Staff are aware of their responsibilities in protecting pupils from harm. The curriculum includes road safety and water safety due to heightened risks in the locality. Governors check and review the safeguarding work of the school. The safeguarding governor meets regularly with the headteacher to discuss safeguarding issues and ensures that policies are up to date. Pupils I spoke to during the inspection said that they feel safe and are kept safe in school. This view is shared by every parent I spoke to and those who responded to Parent View.

### **Inspection findings**

- We agreed several areas of enquiry for this inspection. The first of these was the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes in English. Leaders recognise that this is an area of ongoing development because of newly implemented strategies. Recent phonics training means that staff have access to a wide range of opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Consequently, daily phonics lessons accurately match pupils' needs. Observations and written work seen during the inspection show that pupils use and apply their phonic skills effectively in their learning. As a result of the structured phonics teaching, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. Effective strategies are also in place for individual pupils to help them catch up quickly if they are struggling. These are led by skilled

teaching assistants who have strong subject knowledge. However, leaders recognise that the impact of these recent changes to the teaching of phonics needs to be evaluated to ensure a consistently high standard.

- Reading also has a much higher priority than in previous years. It is now at the heart of your school. Your English team organises whole-school training for all staff to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge that they need to support pupils' learning. Staff accurately assess pupils. As a result, teachers have introduced more activities that develop fluency and comprehension skills so pupils' progress in these areas is improving.
- Across the school, staff take every opportunity to develop pupils' speech and language. Good-quality conversation with pupils is a priority. Pupils talk about what they are going to write before they write it. For example, in Year 1 pupils created their own sentences from pictures they chose. This allowed them to place adjectives correctly in their writing.
- Teachers carefully design learning opportunities for pupils to write at length in English lessons. As a result, pupils have the opportunity to deepen their vocabulary and expand their ideas. Pupils' grammar and punctuation are a strength in their writing and strategies to improve spelling have been successful. Progress in pupils' books shows that opportunities for writing in topic work motivate them. They write with purpose and have opportunities to practise their skills in other subjects. For example, work on the Iron Age in Year 3 produced high-quality writing while developing key history skills and new vocabulary. Work scrutiny and observations in lessons show that pupils' handwriting is consistently good across the school. As a result of these changes, there is good progress in English across all year groups.
- The next area we looked at was how well you are improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. You accurately identify the barriers to learning for this group of pupils. As a result, you ensure that appropriate help is in place for vulnerable pupils and their families. You have ensured that pupils are being given the nurture and guidance that they need. As a result, their attitudes to learning are improving and this has had a positive impact on the progress that they make. The governors visit school to check on the impact of extra resources on pupils' learning. Your pupil premium strategy is appraised termly against pupils' outcomes to measure success. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and, as a result, differences between disadvantaged pupils and others have now diminished.
- Finally, I explored the high rates of persistent absence. You and the governors are taking appropriate action to bring about improvements. You analyse absence information to identify patterns. The family support worker and office staff know families very well and help them by ensuring that individual strategies are put in place to improve attendance. You follow up those pupils who are late or absent to find out why. When I asked them, pupils enthused about the rewards on offer for attendance and particularly liked the display in the main entrance rewarding class attendance with smiley faces. This also raises the profile of attendance. There has been some success because absence overall has decreased and is now just below the national average. However, persistent absence for some pupils is still high. Leaders recognise that they have further work to do to address this issue.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of most-able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of each key stage
- they continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics to ensure a consistently high standard
- they reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school to a level at least in line with the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I held meetings with you, senior staff and middle leaders to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I looked at learning in pupils' books. I also spoke to the local authority improvement partner.

I reviewed documentation which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered responses to the online staff questionnaire.

I visited classes, together with you, to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.