

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 October 2018

Mrs Lesley Jackson
Headteacher
St John the Evangelist RC Primary School, Bromley Cross, Bolton
Darwen Road
Bromley Cross
Bolton
BL7 9HT

Dear Mrs Jackson

Short inspection of St John the Evangelist RC Primary School, Bromley Cross, Bolton

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Staff and governors share your aspirations for every pupil to achieve well in a happy and caring environment, with a strong Christian ethos. You and your deputy headteacher accurately monitor the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that require further enhancement. As a result of your careful support for staff, teaching is effective and standards are improving. You are appropriately focusing on giving pupils more opportunities to develop their skills across the curriculum and to improve their progress in mathematics.

You lead a dedicated staff who are determined to develop their skills and improve standards even further. Teachers welcome the opportunities that you give them to work together in school and with other professionals. Your subject leader in mathematics has worked with Manchester University to gain new insight into teaching mathematics. This is filtering into action in school, and pupils' progress is improving. In different subject areas, middle leaders meet with other schools to share good practice. Staff feel valued and supported. One teacher typified your staff's positive attitude to the school, describing the support that staff give each other as 'like one big family'.

Governors visit the school very regularly and know the staff well. They have a wide range of skills and attend regular training. As a result of their regular monitoring, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for

development. They keep a careful check on the actions you take to improve outcomes, including for disadvantaged pupils and in phonics. Governors ask probing questions and provide a good balance of challenge and support for leaders.

Pupils are happy in lessons and are proud to be members of the school. They behave very well in lessons and are welcoming and polite to visitors. Pupils with whom I spoke described how they learn to follow the school's motto to 'learn to love and love to learn'. Pupils told me that they value learning about other religions, including Islam. They relish the many leadership opportunities that they are given, including in Year 6 when they care for Reception children. Other pupils undertake roles to promote online safety across the school.

Parents and carers who spoke to me at the start of the school day, or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, have an overwhelmingly positive view of the school. They were very keen to describe how much they value the school's 'open door policy', with staff always ready to listen to any concerns that they have. Parents value the nurturing, happy and inclusive environment that 'dedicated staff' provide for pupils. A typical parental comment was, 'Children feel a strong sense of belonging and family.' Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in good attendance for many, although some disadvantaged pupils do not attend regularly.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, and the quality of teaching has been strengthened. You have taken the right steps to improve the teaching of mathematics across the school, including providing staff with training. Staff develop pupils' confidence with number, including written and mental calculations. Teachers make sure that pupils' understanding of place value is secure. Staff provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics. Teachers explain to pupils how to improve their skills and quickly put in place additional teaching to address any gaps in learning that pupils have. The proportion of pupils reaching expected standards and working at greater depth at the end of key stage 1 has risen sharply in 2018, to well above 2017 national averages. However, this was not the case at the end of key stage 2, and unvalidated data points to lower numbers of pupils reaching expected and higher standards. Leaders recognise that improvements to mathematics teaching need embedding across the school.

Leaders have also taken effective action to improve the teaching of spelling. Through well-planned phonics teaching, staff develop pupils' early reading and spelling skills. Across the school, pupils use their spelling skills accurately and confidently in their writing. As a result of these improvements, standards in spelling have risen.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough, fit for purpose and of high quality. They have put in place thorough systems to carry out checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils.

Through regular training, staff and governors have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. As a result, they are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face. Leaders work closely with parents to make sure that pupils are safe. Leaders keep meticulous records of safeguarding concerns and waste no time in contacting other professionals to seek support for families when needed. Useful safeguarding advice is shared with parents on the school's website, including about online safety.

Staff teach pupils about how to keep themselves safe and the importance of speaking to adults when they are worried. Pupils told me that staff listen to them and deal quickly with any concerns that they have, including about bullying. Leaders arrange for visitors to school, including from a national safeguarding charity, to develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Staff, parents and pupils agree that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of lines of enquiry, the first of which related to outcomes for disadvantaged pupils across the school. You and your deputy headteacher have a very clear understanding of the barriers to learning that face this group of pupils. This is because you know these pupils and their families very well. Teachers plan provision very precisely to meet disadvantaged pupils' needs. Leaders make very regular checks on pupils' learning to ensure that additional support is having the impact that it should. You have taken steps to improve pupils' emotional and well-being needs, for example, by providing social skills lessons and additional support to improve disadvantaged pupils' behaviour. Evidence from books and from the school's assessment information shows that current disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in their learning.
- The second key line of enquiry was to check whether improvements to phonics teaching have been maintained. This was in response to a sharp increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 assessment in 2017. I found that phonics teaching is a strength of the school. Leaders have ensured that there is a consistent approach to teaching phonics in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Staff check that teaching matches pupils' abilities. Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop these skills and to apply them to their reading. In 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in Year 1 was above the national average. In Year 2, successful catch up programmes mean that the vast majority of pupils start key stage 2 with the right level of skills in phonics.
- The next key line of enquiry related to pupils' attendance. This was because in 2017 the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils was above other pupils in school and nationally. During the inspection, I found that staff check the attendance of pupils regularly and diligently follow up absences through phone calls and home visits. You strongly discourage parents from taking pupils out of school for term time holidays. Staff quickly put in place measures to prevent pupils from becoming missing in education. Your school social worker works closely with families to encourage pupils to attend school daily. Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used to improve attendance. The impact of measures that you have put in place is that the attendance of pupils across the school has

improved over time, and is now higher than the national average. However, the attendance of some of your disadvantaged pupils remains lower than national averages and other pupils in the school. You are ambitious for the attendance of disadvantaged pupils to improve further, and you are putting in place additional steps to reduce their absences.

- The final key line of enquiry related to whether pupils are receiving a broad and balanced curriculum. Those pupils with whom I spoke said that they find their learning interesting. Pupils enjoy lessons in a range of subjects, including art, Spanish and music. They develop their knowledge of online safety alongside their computing skills. Leaders plan many opportunities for pupils to take part in different sports, including at lunchtime and after school. Pupils learn to be responsible citizens, caring for others and the environment. Leaders plan visits and trips to enrich pupils' learning, for example using the local area to improve pupils' geographical understanding. Older pupils enjoy the outdoor and adventurous trips that you plan, where they take part in activities which improve their team-building skills, confidence and independence. You have taken steps to improve the breadth and depth of the curriculum. Middle leaders are closely monitoring teaching in their subjects. This is to ensure that recent improvements are well established and that teachers develop the breadth and depth of pupils' learning across a range of subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the teaching of mathematics continue so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves further
- middle leaders' work with staff develops and deepens pupils' skills and knowledge across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and four middle leaders. I took account of responses from 18 staff to Ofsted's online survey. I met

with four governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I met with eight pupils and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons. I visited classes with you, where I observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work.

I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I took account of 30 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and evaluations of teaching and learning. I checked records and analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe and your checks on the suitability of staff. I undertook a review of the content of the school's website.