

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 May 2019

Mrs Anne Stopforth
Headteacher
Barley Hill Primary School
Ludsden Grove
Thame
Oxfordshire
OX9 3DH

Dear Mrs Stopforth

Short inspection of Barley Hill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 2019, 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your aim is for Barley Hill School to be 'at least as good as any school in England, if not better'. Leaders and governors share an ambition for continual improvement. Leaders at all levels know their school well and astutely identify areas that need to improve. Governors, too, show commitment to their role. They understand the need to both support and challenge leaders. They gain first-hand experience of the school and use their findings to check that planned changes bring about the desired impact.

You make leadership development a high priority. School leaders' skills are developed well so that they are ready to take on senior leadership roles in other schools. Middle leadership is becoming increasingly effective. This is due to planned professional development and giving middle leaders opportunities to play a meaningful role in driving school improvement. Leaders are passionate in their quest to raise outcomes for all pupils, including those in vulnerable groups. In order to do so, they are improving the quality of teaching across all areas.

Your school is one which is eager to engage with its locality. The school works collaboratively with other nearby schools. You ensure that this partnership working brings benefits for all pupils and staff. For example, teachers can check how their pupils' learning compares to that in other local schools. Barley Hill School is also eager to make strong links with its community. For instance, pupils visit nearby places of worship and older neighbours are invited to the school for lunch.

Pupils enjoy attending school and are highly motivated by their learning. They show commendable application and perseverance in their work and enjoy being challenged. They say that their lessons are fun and that they like their teachers because they are generous and kind. Many pupils are given a range of extra responsibilities. These include becoming school councillors, citizenship champions or members of the school's eco committee. They take on these responsibilities with enthusiasm, embracing the opportunity to play an active role in improving their school. Pupils show good awareness of charitable activities and are keen to support those less fortunate than themselves.

Many parents and carers express positive views about the school, especially about the teachers, who they find to be supportive and approachable. A typical comment was, 'All of the teaching staff that my children come into contact with have always been dedicated and committed to ensuring my children make progress.' A few parents expressed concerns about bullying. No poor behaviour was observed during the inspection. There was one reported incident of bullying last term, which was dealt with appropriately. Pupils to whom I spoke had a sound understanding of what bullying is, including cyber bullying, and told me that teachers deal with it should it occur.

Last year, pupils' attainment in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 was above that seen nationally in all areas. Pupils' current work shows that standards remain high across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Vulnerable pupils are a particular focus for leaders and teachers. Teaching staff check these pupils' progress weekly to ensure that they are making enough progress and that any attainment gaps between them and their classmates are diminishing.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers now plan more demanding tasks, so that the most able pupils routinely tackle tasks that challenge their thinking and make improved rates of progress. The rates of progress of lower-attaining pupils are also better because their learning is broken down into small steps and they receive effective support in achieving these goals.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. These arrangements meet statutory requirements, including the pre-employment checks. Safeguarding records are kept securely and systematically.

All staff and governors benefit from regular safeguarding training. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures. Middle leaders help to ensure that all staff follow these procedures carefully when they have concerns about a pupil's safety or well-being. Governors make regular checks of key aspects of the school's safeguarding practice.

All the staff and almost all the parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaires consider that pupils are safe at the school. Leaders recognise the increasing

importance of keeping pupils safe online. They have responded appropriately by placing greater emphasis on e-safety lessons. Leaders have also arranged workshops for parents and frequently include helpful information about e-safety in school newsletters. Leaders robustly deal with any incidents of cyber bullying. Pupils with whom I spoke have a sound understanding of e-safety. They thoughtfully told me that they would 'turn it off and tell an adult' if they saw anything unsuitable online.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked together at the progress of pupils with below-average prior attainment, the progress in mathematics of pupils who are disadvantaged and whether or not boys and girls achieve equally well in all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders have taken decisive steps since the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching for pupils with below-average prior attainment. For example, these pupils typically receive effective additional support in lessons. As a result, they generally make strong progress in reading and writing. In key stage 2 mathematics lessons, teachers' expectations for these pupils are high. Although pupils show motivation to reach these expectations, some need extra support to do so. This is provided effectively through one-to-one teaching in lessons. However, when support is not readily available, pupils often have no other strategies to use independently and this restricts their progress.
- Leaders have introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics since the last inspection. This ensures that there is consistent challenge for pupils of all abilities, with a focus on problem-solving and encouraging pupils to explain their thinking. This is leading to good and improving progress for all pupils. There are only a small number of disadvantaged pupils in most classes. They benefit from targeted interventions and teachers keep a particularly close check on their progress. Consequently, their rates of progress are at least as strong as that of their classmates.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils enjoy their learning in a wide range of subjects. The emphasis placed on pupils gaining personal experiences engages their interest and deepens their understanding of topics. The wider curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to increase their vocabulary and to develop their writing skills. The quality of this writing matches that produced in pupils' English books.
- Leaders regularly review the content of curriculum topics so that they interest boys and girls equally. During the inspection, there were no observed differences in the involvement of boys and girls in any lessons. Boys' and girls' work in books was also of a similar standard in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, history and geography. Samples of work seen from the wider curriculum were at an appropriate standard. However, leaders recognise that they need to describe better the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn in each year group. Work to do so is under way, though still at an early stage. Current progress in subjects from the wider curriculum is not as strong as it is in

reading, writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of lower-attaining pupils in mathematics in key stage 2 is accelerated
- the school's wider curriculum is developed so that pupils learn subject-specific knowledge and skills more securely.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Donovan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the effectiveness of aspects of the school's provision. We visited classrooms together to observe pupils' learning, to talk with pupils and to look at their work. I met with a group of three middle leaders and also with a group of eight pupils to discuss their views about the school. I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements and looked closely at a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement planning, information about pupils' current outcomes and various policies. There were 19 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 95 responses from parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 56 written comments. I took account of all these responses, together with those expressed by parents to me at the beginning of the school day, and held a telephone conversation with one parent.