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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Sam Ray
Executive Headteacher
Betley CofE VC Primary School
Church Lane
Betley
Crewe
Cheshire
CW3 9AX

Dear Mrs Ray

Short inspection of Betley CofE VC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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.

You have improved teaching, raised expectations and established a strong leadership team. As a result, standards have been high. You currently have plans to reorganise the leadership structure and teaching staff across the two schools in the federation. This is in order to ensure that a senior leader is always present at both schools and to make effective use of teachers' skills and talents. You, the leadership team and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for development. However, further work is needed to develop and fully embed the curriculum changes you have recently made. This is so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher standards across all subjects by the end of key stage 2. Staff continually reflect on their practice and take decisive and effective action to ensure that they achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils.

Governors have high expectations of all staff. They use their skills and expertise to monitor specific aspects of school life. They ask leaders appropriately challenging questions. As a result, they have had a positive impact on whole-school improvement. Governors work closely with the designated lead for safeguarding and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They keep themselves up to date with training. Governors are committed to the school and proud to be part of the school community.

Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and those who spoke to inspectors during the inspection, shared positive views about the school. They agree that their children are safe, happy and looked after well. A typical parent comment was, 'Mrs Ray is an inspiring headteacher. She knows every child and makes sure they feel special.'

You have addressed the areas for development identified at the last inspection. Pupils are set work that matches their needs and abilities and challenges them to think more widely about the topics they are studying. Pupils' writing skills are now developed well, with all pupils meeting the expected standard in writing for the last three years. You have made improvements to the outdoor area used by the early years, including resurfacing the playground and purchasing additional resources. The children have access to a sensory garden which is currently being tidied up by parent volunteers, and this will further enhance the learning space available for learning in the early years.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong. You ensure that all staff and governors are well trained and are clear about policies and procedures. The record-keeping for the recruitment of staff is thorough and precise. Concerns about pupils are carefully logged and appropriately detailed. You follow up concerns in a timely manner. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are confident that if they have a problem it will be sorted out. Pupils are aware of the different forms bullying can take; however, formal and informal discussions with pupils indicated that bullying was rare. Pupils say it is a safe school and that both pupils and staff are kind and caring. Through the curriculum and assemblies, you teach pupils about e-safety, road safety and stranger danger.

Inspection findings

- Most pupils by the end of key stage 2 make progress in line with other pupils nationally. A high percentage of pupils have achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics over the last three years. However, some pupils do not reach the higher standards of which they are capable. The inspection found several positive strategies being implemented to address this. These include effective questioning and timely intervention by support staff, which helps pupils deepen their thinking and understanding. Tasks set in lessons enthuse and excite pupils and there are high expectations in terms of what pupils can and should achieve. For example, in a Year 3/4 class pupils studying ancient Greece were posed the question: 'What would you put back in Pandora's box?' The debate and discussion in class demonstrated deep thinking by pupils who were able to articulately justify their reasons for choice. Teachers have undertaken training aimed at developing challenge for pupils and half-termly progress meetings focus on the most able and the challenges that are in place to enable further progress to be made by these pupils.

- Children enter the early years with skills broadly in line with age-related expectations. There is an early years lead in place across the federation and an established Reception team in the school. The quality of the outdoor provision is now much improved as staff have observed and visited schools with effective learning environments. Staff are skilled in motivating children's play to move learning forward and provide resources to challenge and stretch children's thinking. For example, the inspector observed children smelling a range of herbs outside in a tray in response to the question beside them which said, 'What can you smell?' Children have access to a 'mud kitchen' and a covered area so learning can continue outside whatever the weather. Many examples were seen in books that demonstrated children making strong progress with their writing from the outset of their time in school.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is suitably experienced and qualified and has release time to execute her role effectively. She has a clear and detailed understanding of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many cases were shared where pupils with SEND had made progress in their learning. The school uses a range of external agencies for advice. The school is tenacious at following up referrals and seeking support as required. Since the last inspection there is greater staff expertise and awareness surrounding the early identification and screening of pupils that may have SEND. Interventions are monitored carefully and changed if found not to be effective. Pupils with SEND are well supported within class and are fully included in all activities. One parent commented, 'Pupils are well behaved and the school promotes an ethos of inclusivity.' Inspection evidence also found this to be the case.
- The curriculum is rich and varied and provides opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding over time. There is work currently being undertaken that looks at progression across subjects and assessment of non-core subjects and this needs further development to ensure that all pupils achieve the higher standards of which they are capable. Leaders make best use of staff's specialist skills, such as the ability to teach brass instruments to pupils. The school places great emphasis on science and physical education, achieving both the Primary Science Quality Mark at silver level and the School Games Mark at bronze level. Pupils speak highly of their teachers and lessons and the range of residential trips, day visits and visitors that enrich their learning. They spoke enthusiastically about their stay in York, which included visits to the Yorvik Viking Centre and a tour of York Minster. Pupils have the opportunity to care for a range of classroom animals including tortoises, guinea pigs and ducklings and understand what responsible pet ownership looks like. Topics are often launched with 'wow' moments. For example, a topic entitled 'The Greatest Show' saw pupils involved in a circus workshop before researching the job of a circus performer and writing a story set in a circus.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum is further developed so all pupils have opportunities to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable across the full range of curriculum subjects.
- changes that are being made across the federation to leadership roles and staffing are fully embedded to ensure consistency of leadership across subjects and classes at Betley Primary.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and teaching staff. I met with two governors and the school secretary.

I carried out short observations in lessons with you and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I talked with pupils in lessons and at breaktime and met with a small group to talk about school life and work. I spoke to parents at the end of the school day.

I paid attention to several key lines of enquiry; these included the teaching of writing, challenge in lessons for pupils, provision for pupils with SEND and the safeguarding culture of the school.

By the end of the inspection there were 40 responses on Parent View. I took account of these and considered 12 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I looked at several key documents, including the school's evaluation of performance, records relating to the work of governors, behaviour and bullying records and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and procedures for keeping pupils safe.