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Miss Karen Taylor
Principal
Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary Academy
Shaws Lane
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Dear Miss Taylor

Short inspection of Bishop Lonsdale Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You were appointed as principal in September 2018. The vice-principal joined the school at the same time. Together you have made a positive start and have rapidly identified the strengths of the school and areas for improvement. Your work with middle leaders is building on their talents and enthusiasm. Leaders at all levels benefit from their collaborative work with St Chads Academies Trust, where leaders come together in 'quality learning circles' to share good practice and update their knowledge. You are developing an outward-looking school where staff learn from, and with, other colleagues in the multi-academy trust.

You set high expectations for pupils and staff. Pupils are well behaved and keen to work hard. Staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire all said that they are proud to be a member of staff at Bishop Lonsdale. Staff appreciate the high standards of aspiration for all pupils. The majority of parents and carers are positive about the school and would recommend the school to other parents. Parents say that their children get off to a great start in Nursery and Reception, and they value the positive relationships with teachers. Some parents say that there have been many changes in the school and they are keen to see communication continue to develop.

Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is high. They are enthusiastic, keen and

inquisitive learners. High-quality teaching leads to standards that are above the national average at the end of early years, at key stage 1 in reading and writing, and at key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing at the end of key stage 2 are in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching greater depth at the end of key stage 2 is well above the national average in reading, but not in writing and mathematics.

Leaders regularly monitor teaching. Their skills in this area are supported through joint work with staff from the multi-academy trust. Staff are clear about the strengths in their teaching and where further work is required. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in all areas of the curriculum. There is a drive and momentum in school for pupils to achieve the very best they can. However, you have identified that in some classes, some pupils are capable of even more. This variation in challenge is slowing the progress of some of the most able pupils in mathematics and writing. You are working closely with staff, providing training, mentoring and support to address this. Staff say that leaders are using professional development to encourage, challenge and support the continued improvement in the craft of teaching. This is resulting in the majority of pupils in school making good progress from their starting points.

The curriculum provides pupils with lively, innovative learning experiences. The enrichments to the curriculum greatly enhance pupils' cultural and language development. For example, good use is made of visitors in school to promote pupils' understanding of the different jobs people have. Visitors include a nurse specialising in prosthetics, a paramedic blood-bike rider, farmers, an army officer, a veterinary surgeon and local police community support officers. Pupils use the local environment well to develop their knowledge and skills of nature and gardening. Visits and residential visits are highlights for the pupils who, as a result, have a strong sense of teamwork. This high-quality curriculum brings learning to life for all. Pupils are articulate and knowledgeable. They are excited to learn and keen to come to school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The trust board and staff ensure that the safety of pupils is central to the decisions they make. Staff and trustees receive regular training on safeguarding. As a result, all adults are knowledgeable about safeguarding and whistle-blowing procedures. Staff know to whom they should report concerns.

Detailed safeguarding records are maintained. These show detailed recording of actions taken and how concerns are followed up. Records are stored securely in school. You and the vice-principal are trained in safer recruitment and are confident about which pre-employment checks must be carried out prior to employing new staff.

Pupils feel safe in school and say that they know whom to tell if they have any concerns. Pupils behave well and say that staff deal with any incidents of bullying quickly. The curriculum is teaching pupils about different types of bullying and how

to keep themselves safe on the internet. Nine out of 10 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry during this inspection was to see how well pupils are progressing and being challenged in writing. It is clear that the teaching of writing has a high priority in the school from the start of Nursery. Work in books shows that pupils enjoy writing for a purpose. For example, a whole-school study of 'Macbeth' gave plenty of opportunities to write in all year groups. Pupils are articulate and brimming with ideas. Staff carefully help learners to use their well-developed grammar and punctuation skills to craft their writing. More reluctant writers in key stage 2 are encouraged to see themselves as writers through their work scribing for the youngest children in the school. The older pupils spoke with pride about their writing with Nursery children. Books show that in some classes, there is a good level of challenge for the most able writers, but in others, high expectations are not always consistently applied in all lessons. There is a high standard of presentation in English books. However, at times pupils' spelling and presentation in other areas of the curriculum are not as precise as in their English books.
- I looked at how leaders continue to foster a love of reading. Leaders have created stimulating book areas in school. Reading is celebrated visually throughout the school. Children's reading gets off to a swift start in Nursery. More recently, leaders have reviewed the reading books to ensure they match more closely the sounds children are learning in early years. Phonics teaching is effective, and pupils use these skills to sound out unknown words. Good-quality texts are used in all year groups to promote access to a wide range of authors and genres of book. Leaders monitor the progress of reading. Staff work together to moderate their judgements on reading comprehension skills. As a result, pupils are developing a good range of comprehension skills because teachers are matching work to the needs of all groups. Teachers' questioning is effective. It promotes pupils' thinking and challenges them to explain ideas fully. Pupils talk confidently about different authors and their enjoyment of reading for pleasure and reading whole series of books by the same author.
- Another line of enquiry was to look at how science is taught across the school. Outcomes in science are above the national average at the end of key stages 1 and 2. The science leader is leading this subject with enthusiasm. Through the multi-academy trust, leaders meet with other subject leaders to share ideas and good practice. Events such as science week raise the profile of science. Pupils see themselves as scientists who ask questions and explore and investigate ideas. New vocabulary is taught by staff who have good subject knowledge of science. As a result, pupils are making good progress in their scientific knowledge and understanding. Good use is made of visits and visitors to promote scientific enquiry. For example, pupils in Year 6 enjoyed learning about the 'cabbage science experiment', and pupils in Year 5 enjoyed their visit to Jodrell Bank. Pupils are articulate and base their scientific responses on the evidence they have

found. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils were exploring the science of sound. They made reasoned arguments about how to vary the pitch of sound when playing different instruments.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to develop pupils' writing and spelling skills in all areas of the curriculum
- teachers provide a good level of challenge, so that a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards in writing and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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

Pamela Matty
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the vice-principal, the leaders of English and science, newly qualified teachers and members of the multi-academy trust board. I visited classrooms with you and the vice-principal, scrutinised pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their learning. I talked to pupils to gather their views about the school during the school day and at breaktime and lunchtime. I reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. I sought the views of parents at the start of the school day. I took account of the 61 response to Parent View, the 49 free-text responses from parents, one letter from a parent, and one telephone call and two emails to Ofsted during the inspection, and the 20 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.