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Ian McDonald  
Headteacher  
Bishop Martin Church of England Primary School  
Birkrig  
Digmoor  
Skelmersdale  
Lancashire  
WN8 9BN

Dear Mr McDonald

### **No formal designation inspection of Bishop Martin Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit with Ian Hardman, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 25 January 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss your school.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for no formal designation (NFD) inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted about the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance) and the behaviour and attitudes of pupils.

We do not give graded judgements on NFD inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a section 5 inspection and will be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the NFD inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

### **Evidence**

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you and the senior leadership team, a range of staff, groups of pupils, parents and carers, the chair of the governing body and the nominated governor for safeguarding. We also spoke to representatives from Lancashire local authority and the Diocese of Liverpool. We also

took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, the staff survey and the pupil survey.

When considering pupils' behaviour and safeguarding, we observed pupils entering the school building at the start of the day and outside at playtime. We considered the records for behaviour and attendance. We reviewed a range of documentation for safeguarding, including the minutes of governors' meetings and the register of employment checks carried out on staff before they start their employment at the school.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

## **Safeguarding is effective**

### **Context**

There are currently 234 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is over double the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is similar to the national average. Around three quarters of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. This is also the case for those pupils who have an education, health and care plan. More pupils join and leave the school during the academic year than is found nationally.

### **Main Findings**

You and the senior leadership team have taken positive action to improve the way in which behaviour is managed at the school. You have sought the views of pupils and staff to understand how behaviour is managed. This has resulted in a new system where pupils are encouraged to 'Shine Bright'. As a result, all of the staff that we spoke to, and all of those responding to the staff survey, are positive about the new behaviour system. Staff feel well supported by leaders.

There are positive signs that the new approach to behaviour management is making a difference. Pupils are settled in class. They work and play together well. However, you, the governors and the staff are aware that it will take time for all staff to follow the new policy in a consistent manner. For example, the new system aims to manage the impact of misbehaviour rather than addressing the root causes of the behaviour. As such, there is a small group of pupils who have not been provided with the strategies that they need to understand and improve their own conduct.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Those that we spoke to said that pupils typically behave well. They also said that any incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with in a calm manner. When bullying takes place, pupils are confident that staff address this effectively to make sure it does not happen again. Pupils know about different types

of bullying and the harmful impact such behaviour can have on others. They understand what makes a healthy friendship.

The large majority of the parents that we spoke to, and those responding to the Ofsted Parent View survey, are positive about the school. Parents feel that bullying is identified and dealt with effectively. You have thought carefully about how to involve parents in managing pupils' behaviour. For example, teachers inform parents when pupils make the right choice to amend their behaviour. There is also a wide range of awards to promote pupils' positive behaviour and regular attendance at school. Governors have been involved with reviewing the approach to managing behaviour. They are keeping a close eye on how well the new system is working.

Following the previous inspection, you and the pastoral team began to make positive strides in improving pupils' attendance. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected pupils' attendance. Since the school reopened to all pupils following the national lockdowns, you have noticed some pupils' attendance is consistently low. You have ensured that there are clear systems in place to make sure that pupils are safe when they are not in school. You and the staff are doing all that you can to support pupils back into school. You have appointed an additional member of staff to the pastoral team to help support those families who need extra help in making sure that pupils are in school each day. Governors have also recently agreed to more formal action when parents keep their children away from school without good reason.

You regularly revise the school's safeguarding processes and procedures in light of new government and local authority guidance. Staff know and follow these procedures well. The records that you keep of safeguarding incidents are detailed and clearly identify how concerns are addressed and resolved. These records show the effective partnership between staff and other agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the early help that they need. Staff and governors have received comprehensive training on how to keep pupils safe. Staff have a strong awareness of how to spot the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm.

Governors have received relevant safeguarding training. This includes training in safer recruitment and the 'Prevent' duty. The safeguarding governor makes regular visits to the school to question safeguarding arrangements and to provide assurances to the governing body that safeguarding is effective.

Pupils told us that they feel safe in all parts of the school. They feel comforted by the presence of adults at playtimes. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors, and those responding to the pupil survey, said that they would feel comfortable raising any concerns with members of staff. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

You, the leadership team and governors have made extra efforts recently to consider the pressures on staff and their workloads. The responses to the staff survey show

that almost all staff are proud to work at the school. The large majority feel that you and other leaders take workload into account when making decisions. All of the staff we spoke to said that they felt they could approach you and other leaders if they needed any extra support.

### **Additional support**

A recent review by the local authority has been helpful in validating your actions to promote pupils' positive behaviour. This review has provided assurances for governors about how well the new system is working. You have also made use of advice and support from the diocese. These sources of support are giving you, the senior leaders and governors confidence to further improve the current approaches to safeguarding and behaviour in school.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- There are a group of pupils who are persistently absent from school. This means that these pupils are missing valuable learning. You, the leadership team and the governing body should review the current systems, and continue to work with parents, to ensure that pupils' attendance improves.
- There remain some inconsistencies in the way that staff manage pupils' behaviour. Staff are not helping some pupils to improve their behaviour well enough, especially those who are most in need of support. This is because staff focus on dealing with the isolated incidents of poor behaviour, rather than understanding the root cause. Therefore, pupils are not helped to understand how to manage their behaviour for themselves. You should ensure that all staff follow the new approaches to promoting positive behaviour. You should also equip staff with the knowledge and expertise to support pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**