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Mrs Melanie Walker
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Walker

Short inspection of Bollington St John's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017, 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You became headteacher in September 2015 and have worked tirelessly to implement effective structures and systems to ensure high-quality teaching and learning. You, your governors and staff work together to create a caring school where children are happy and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Pupils told the inspector, 'We love every single lesson we do,' and that they are excited by the variety of topics that they are taught and the interesting activities that they are given in class.

There have been some considerable changes since the last inspection. You have led a federation with a local school during your time as headteacher. The local authority and the governing body have recently dissolved the federation of the two schools. This resulted in a period of significant change for leaders and the whole community. During this time, you have maintained standards at Bollington St John's school. Parents and governors are appreciative of your 'strong and dignified' leadership.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Parents feel that teachers and leaders are very approachable and that they are listened to. Parents comment, 'Nothing is more important to them than my child's education and well-being.' Parents are actively encouraged to engage with school activities, for example through monthly celebration assemblies, 'Secret Reader', 'Stay, Play and Pray', and strong PTA links and events. Staff are proud to work at Bollington St John's,

commenting, 'The children in this school have a fantastic educational journey with us. They are given endless opportunities and leave with a smile on their face each day and a tear in their eye in year 6.' Indeed, almost every pupil and parent would recommend the school to somebody moving into the area.

The school's strong Christian ethos is evident throughout the daily life of the school. Pupils show respect for each other and for staff. They care for younger pupils, the environment and nature. Your mission statement of 'Where talent grows' is evident in pupils' engagement and achievement. The school celebrates the talents of each child through sporting activities, youth speaking competitions, 'praise' assemblies and myriad extra-curricular clubs. Pupils are confident and eloquent in discussions. They are developing into positive young citizens as a result of the high-quality education and guidance that they receive.

You, senior leaders and governors have taken action to address the areas of improvement since the last inspection. You provide staff with clear direction for learning, to ensure that pupil progress is every teacher's highest priority. In doing this, you focused on building the foundations of robust monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. You have also ensured a bright, lively and stimulating environment in every classroom which celebrates pupils' achievements and promotes high-quality work. You have also ensured that the target-setting process for pupils is aspirational. This has been successful, but you acknowledge that there is further work to do to ensure that all pupils are stretched and challenged to work at the highest level.

The previous inspection team also asked governors and leaders to involve pupils in finding out things for themselves more actively, especially in early years. You have made substantial improvements to provision and resources in this area. Children in Reception help to plan their own learning. They study topics of interest to them and have a structured choice of activities using 'rainbow sticks' to encourage independent learning and progress across the early years curriculum.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps for the school. You track the progress of pupils closely in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. This in-depth knowledge of current learners ensures that staff plan learning activities closely matched to the needs of pupils. You acknowledged the need to develop your tracking and monitoring of progress across the wider curriculum to ensure appropriate stretch and challenge for all. This will enable governors to hold you firmly to account for pupils' progress across the curriculum. During the inspection, we also discussed the development of writing through cross-curricular links. You are focusing on providing a wide range of opportunities for pupils to write for purpose across the curriculum. This will help leaders to encourage pupils to achieve greater depth in their writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, records are detailed and of high quality. Procedures for recruiting staff are

robust and meet statutory requirements. Leaders are thorough in making sure that all staff and governors have completed relevant and recent training, so they know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils.

Pupils are actively involved in promoting safeguarding. The pupils' safeguarding council recently delivered an assembly on safeguarding to the school. Pupils spoken with during the inspection say that there are rarely any incidents of bullying, and if they do occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils trust the adults in school and say that they would talk to them if they had any concerns or worries. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both personally and online, and they talk confidently about how safe they feel in school. These views are also confirmed by parents and staff.

Inspection findings

- The early years team has improved provision, but the outcomes for children vary from year to year due to the very small numbers of pupils. Despite this variation over time, when measuring the progress of specific cohorts, good progress can be seen from individual starting points.
- Leadership of early years is strong. Your focus on 'child-led' learning has ignited children's interest and enthusiasm. Children play an active role in looking after the quails which hatched last year. Children are now engrossed in studying the life cycle of the duck eggs they are currently incubating.
- Achievement in the Year 1 phonics check fluctuates due to small cohorts each year, but phonics has a high profile across early years and key stage 1. Leaders work closely together to ensure consistency in teaching and in the intervention strategies used to support pupils. New activities have been developed, including using music in the teaching of phonics, which enthuses and motivates pupils. Learning support assistants are supported and trained to deliver high-quality interventions.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics, although pupils are not achieving greater depth in these subjects. Information on current learners suggests that some pupils this year are on track to make more-rapid progress in the core subjects.
- Pupils are engaged with their learning and make good progress as a result. For example, in key stage 1, children were writing about the life cycle of a duck egg, having worked with Reception pupils last week to 'candle' the eggs to see inside. Pupils used and wrote technical phrases such as 'blood vessels' and 'embryo' with confidence.
- Progress at the end of Year 6 is broadly average in writing and mathematics. Progress in reading is much stronger. Pupils enjoy reading and are keen to discuss texts that they are currently reading. Leaders' priorities are to improve writing and mathematics. They are developing writing as a whole-school focus and are working with a local mathematics hub to promote progress and mastery in this area further.

- Behaviour across the school is good, both in and outside lessons. Pupils are well-mannered and polite. Pupils move around the school in a sensible manner and show high levels of responsibility, from clearing up after themselves at lunchtime to holding positions of responsibility in class and across the school. Pupils understand the school rules and comply with the high expectations of staff. Pupils' behaviour in a whole-school worship assembly about Lent and Easter was impeccable.
- Leaders have put effective measures in place to support the small minority of pupils who miss time at school through absence. Strategies to re-engage individual pupils are supportive and nurturing. Attendance of current learners has improved significantly and there are currently no pupils who are persistently absent.
- Leadership of attendance and special needs provision are very strong and build on in-depth knowledge of pupils and their families. Families and pupils are well supported by the special educational needs coordinator, who is resolute and determined that every pupil receives the help they need to enable them to develop and progress well.
- You and your governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved further. You work well with external advisors, including the local authority and a diocesan school consultant, to continue to move the school forward. You and your governors are ambitious for the school and want every child to achieve their potential.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new assessment systems are embedded further, so that teachers, senior leaders and governors know how well pupils are progressing across the wider curriculum and can plan accordingly for stretch and challenge
- opportunities for 'writing for purpose' are embedded, so that extended writing is further developed across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders and the lead teachers for phonics and key stage 1. In addition, I met with members of the governing body,

including the chair of the governing body and your diocesan consultant, and spoke to a representative from the local authority. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You and your senior leaders accompanied me on visits to classes, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books. I also observed a worship assembly.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance and the school's assessment data of pupils' progress and attainment. I also scrutinised a range of policies and the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation report.

I also undertook a review of the school's website, which complies with government regulations. As part of the inspection, I considered 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 33 responses to the pupil questionnaire, 52 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, as well as comments received via the free text facility. I also spoke with parents informally on the playground.