

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Esther Bland
Headteacher
Broadbottom Church of England Primary School
Mottram Road
Broadbottom
Hyde
Cheshire
SK14 6BB

Dear Mrs Bland

Short inspection of Broadbottom Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2016, 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 March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Broadbottom is a small school with a big heart. All staff know the children very well and value their contributions, show a high level of care and have high academic expectations. Your passion and determination have made sure that being able to read is a fundamental non-negotiable skill for all pupils by the end of Year 6. This has been highly successful, with well above average attainment and progress across the school in reading. Most pupils enjoy school and were very positive about how staff enable them to be independent and take on responsibilities.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the leadership of subjects and the clarity of setting targets for pupils. You, senior leaders, governors and staff have taken action to improve both of these areas. Teams of staff, linking with Mottram, your 'sister' school, work together to lead single, and sometimes a few, subjects. They observe teaching, look through pupils' work and take action to improve weaknesses they identify. One of this year's intentions is to improve the teaching of science in both schools and staff are working together to improve pupils' skills in experimentation and their perseverance in investigations. All staff are now involved in setting targets for pupils and assessing their progress across the year. There is a clear focus on identifying the strengths of each child and what they need to do next to improve.

You and other leaders have already identified the next areas that need improvement: pupils' progress in mathematics, particularly their ability to reason mathematically and apply their knowledge in problems. In addition, you are already working on a plan to raise boys' attainment by, for example, introducing more male role models.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Monthly newsletters frequently mention pupils' safety through, for example, safer parking outside the school and preventing pupils from climbing up railings. Visitors are greeted with a useful leaflet explaining child protection obligations and procedures. There is a thorough system in place to check on staff's and volunteers' eligibility to work with pupils. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You are relentless in following up cases, including visiting children's homes. You and other staff are also persistent when agencies, such as social services, are reluctant to act.

Staff are trained so that they know what to do if they detect any form of abuse, including more extreme behaviours, such as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Some parents and pupils mentioned bullying in the online surveys. You are realistic about the possibility of bullying occurring in school, particularly isolation and online bullying. There are effective systems in place to identify bullying, including anonymised referrals. The vast majority of pupils said that they feel safe at school all or most of the time and teachers are good at resolving incidents.

Inspection findings

- When children start Reception they have the skills and understanding of typical four-year-olds. In 2015, children's attainment was below average at the end of Reception, which means many children were not ready for Year 1. Since then things have improved because senior leaders have taken action to restructure teaching in the early years. During my visit, children were all actively involved in learning about penguins. They picked up knowledge about penguins' habitats and life processes. One child confidently told me about penguins eating fish, krill and squid before choosing to write this in sentences and another used a range of resources to order penguin numbers from 0 to 26. These examples indicate that children who are currently in Reception are operating at levels higher than those that are typical for their age.
- There has been a five-year decline in standards in Key Stage 1 from well-above average to average. In 2015, boys attained approximately a year behind the girls in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work indicates that, in mathematics, there is a lack of challenge and progress.
- In contrast, attainment at the end of Year 6 has risen in each of the last five years and attainment in 2015 was exceptionally high, particularly in reading, where over three quarters of pupils attained the higher Level 5. Reading is your passion and that is obvious. There are high standards in reading and in

the use of phonics (sounds that letters make in words) across all year groups and pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. In 2015, every pupil made at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and a high proportion made even better progress particularly in reading and writing.

- Boys' attainment lagged below girls' attainment, however. You correctly identified in your self-evaluation and school improvement plan that boys' attainment needs to be raised and have already started to tackle it. Similarly, you have identified from pupils' work, and from your checks on teaching, that in mathematics pupils could be making even faster progress if they developed their skills of reasoning mathematically and applied their knowledge to different problems and investigations.
- Disadvantaged pupils (those pupils who are eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after) make good progress from their starting points. You have created a very good system of tracking this group of pupils and identifying what interventions or challenges have been or could be funded by the pupil premium. For example, staff think about what more-able pupils need so that they are challenged.
- You and your senior leaders are effective in continually improving what the school does. There are some outstanding examples, in the curriculum, of you developing pupils' British values and their respect for, and understanding of, different faiths and beliefs. The older pupils, for example, have produced high-quality insight in their work around humanism. Pupils conducted high-quality research on the names listed on the village cenotaph to find out the history and backgrounds of where the fallen soldiers had lived in the village.
- The quality of governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors are better informed about teaching and assessment information. They are better positioned to challenge the school to improve groups of pupils' attainment and progress and to advise or suggest areas for improvement. There is no system at present to check that they are fulfilling all aspects of the law. At the start of the inspection, for example, I pointed out that the school is not meeting its obligations in relation to information which should be displayed on the website. The sports premium should be spent on aspects that are additional to the National Curriculum, yet money is being used to fund swimming lessons. In addition, at the start of the inspection, policies and procedures did not comply fully with the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act.
- The local authority has provided limited support. However, it has been effective. Governors, for example, new to the governing body, have been well trained and, as a result, they are knowledgeable and well placed to contribute in meetings. The local authority and the diocese are supportive of leaders. They respond quickly to any help or requests from senior leaders.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- boys' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is raised so that it at

least matches girls' attainment

- pupils make better progress in mathematics, particularly in their ability to reason mathematically and to solve problems
- there is a system to check that the school meets all of its duties under the law.

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 Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During the inspection, I spoke, by telephone, with the school improvement partner employed by the school and I met a representative of the local authority. I also held a discussion with four of the school's non-staff governors.
- I took into account the views of the 33 parents, 69 pupils and 11 members of staff who completed Ofsted's online surveys.
- With you, I observed teaching in three out of the four classes. I looked through a few disadvantaged pupils' work from two of the classes.
- I considered a sample of the school's documents, including the school improvement plan, policies and other documents on the website, a summary of its self-evaluation, some information about assessment on entry into reception and published assessment information.
- Throughout the day I met with you to discuss improvement since the previous inspection and how the school protects and ensures the safety of children.