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Mrs Claire Lowe
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Dear Mrs Lowe

Short inspection of Baldwins Gate CofE (VC) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 October 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 and your governing body have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and, as a result, you are taking effective action to secure continued improvement.

Baldwins Gate CofE (VC) Primary School is considerably smaller than the average-sized primary school and leaders have used this to build an inclusive school community with a strong set of values. Staff know pupils as individuals and use this to encourage pupils to try their best, speak gently, extend a helping hand, choose to be happy, say please and thank you, celebrate each other's achievements and remember that they are loved. These values permeate all that the school does and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils enjoy learning at the school. They are engaged and interested in their studies and their independence is purposely and consistently developed. Pupils behave very well both inside and outside of the classroom. They are polite, considerate and happy. However, they have the potential to do more to help shape the future of the school.

Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. All of the high proportion of parents who made their views known to inspectors would recommend the school to another parent. All believe that they receive valuable information from the school

and all parents feel that their child is happy, safe and well looked after at Baldwins Gate. One parent summed up the view of many by telling me that a positive feature of the school is the 'love for the children'.

The school has a number of strengths. Early years provision is of a very high quality and phonics is taught well. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effectively supported to make good progress from their starting points and outcomes for all pupils at the end of key stage 1 and 2 were strong in 2014 and 2015.

However, outcomes in 2016 did not match those of the previous two years. By the end of key stage 2, middle-ability pupils had made slower progress than similar pupils nationally in English and mathematics and the most able pupils made slow progress in reading. By the end of key stage 1, the most able and middle-ability pupils had made slower progress in mathematics than similar pupils nationally.

Leaders and staff are taking effective action to improve the achievement of all groups of pupils currently in the school and you have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection.

All staff follow the school's marking policy and pupils are given opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. Pupils appreciated the opportunity to enter a national writing competition and many produce extended pieces of writing in subjects such as history and geography.

Teachers also provide demanding tasks to deepen pupils' understanding across the curriculum, including mathematical challenges. These activities build upon the formal teaching of mathematics and develop reasoning and the application of knowledge. Homework is often used to refine pupils' skills in English and mathematics.

Middle leadership is developing in the school. Staff with responsibilities for safeguarding, early years and special educational needs and/or disabilities have received appropriate training and support so that they are contributing well to school improvement. However, you have correctly identified that further training and development is needed to extend effective leadership roles throughout the school.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers pupils a range of opportunities in the humanities and linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical and artistic learning. Specialist teachers deliver high-quality lessons in music and French and pupils have achieved commendable sporting successes in, for example, cross-country running and girls' football. The curriculum supports good progress and contributes well to pupils' outstanding behaviour, their welfare and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, you are keen to develop the creative and aesthetic aspects of the curriculum further.

Governance of the school is strong. Governors are extremely committed to Baldwins Gate and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They share your ambition for the pupils' success and have the knowledge and skills to hold you and staff to close account. Governors offer appropriate support and challenge to help to improve the school further.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a well-developed culture for keeping pupils safe. Staff and governors have had up-to-date training and are well informed about their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding pupils. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare so referrals are timely and outside agencies are used appropriately.

The site is secure and careful checks are made on staff and visitors. Records are well kept and stored securely and staff with overall responsibility for safeguarding lead this aspect of the school's work very well.

Pupils are taught to stay safe. For example, they are aware of potential dangers when they are using the internet and they understand how to keep themselves safe around roads and water. They feel safe in school and believe that bullying is extremely rare. However, they are confident that staff would deal with any unkindness quickly and effectively, should it occur.

Inspection findings

- The school is well led and managed. You have high aspirations for your pupils and staff and you have taken effective action to address the areas for development you have identified through a thorough evaluation of the work of the school.
- As the most able pupils had made slow progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 in 2016, leaders analysed the reasons for this in order to take informed action to make improvements. Pupils now read a wider range of texts and they are asked probing questions about what they have read. Detailed responses to questions are insisted upon and comprehension and inference are developed through discussion. Well-stocked class libraries are used frequently, reading is recorded in detailed logs and interventions are in place to improve the reading of pupils of all abilities. Consequently, progress in reading is accelerating and the most able pupils currently in the school are making faster progress than previously. An enjoyment of reading is being nurtured.
- Effective action is also being taken to improve the progress of pupils with middle prior attainment in the school. Once again, interventions have been informed by close analysis of last year's outcomes and the needs of individual pupils. Progress has improved as pupils are set accessible, manageable and achievable targets that are closely monitored so prompt action can take place if required. Pupils in all year groups are challenged to make faster progress as activities are carefully planned to stretch pupils of all abilities. There has been a particular focus on improving writing by promoting grammatical accuracy, the use of extended sentences, correct spelling and careful consideration of the audience that a piece

of writing is intended to engage. This has improved the writing of all groups of pupils but particularly middle-ability pupils.

- As a smaller proportion of pupils with high and middle prior attainment achieved the expected standard or above in mathematics by the end of key stage 1 in 2016, leaders have taken effective action to improve progress in mathematics. There is evidence of formal mathematics teaching and independent practical investigations taking place where pupils complete different challenges informed by their prior learning. As a result, current Year 2 pupils are making good progress and the additional support that is being given to pupils in the current Year 3 is having a positive impact.
- Attendance, impacted upon by individual circumstances, declined between 2014 and 2016 and was below the national average in 2016. School staff have taken effective action to address this and attendance is now above last year's national average. Few pupils are regularly absent but systems to ensure that the educational needs of those who miss school as a result of medical reasons are fully met are not robust enough.
- Staff value their professional development, and leadership beyond that provided by the headteacher and the governors is improving. However, you have correctly identified that leadership at all levels needs to be developed through appropriate training and support in order to improve the school further.
- Pupils are willing to take responsibility in the school but this is not fully developed. Pupils would like to take on greater responsibility and assume leadership roles in order to help their school be the best that it can be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils of all abilities make rapid progress in a range of subjects across the school
- the educational needs of pupils who are regularly absent are fully met
- a culture of continuing professional development and opportunities for staff to lead developments helps to secure further school improvement
- pupils are given additional responsibilities and leadership roles to help to shape the future of the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair 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

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, staff and eight governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to pupils formally and informally and heard a small number of pupils read. I made short visits to every classroom with the headteacher and looked at pupils' books. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 51 responses and 26 freetext responses to Parent View. I also looked at six responses to the staff questionnaire and spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, information about managing teachers' performance and staff training records. Minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed. I also looked at published information on the school's website.