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Reverend Craig Watson
Headteacher
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Dear Reverend Watson

Short inspection of Bury Church of England High School

Following my visit to the school on 28 June 2016 with Emma Gregory, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is continuing to improve because of the sound leadership you provide. You have created a clear sense of purpose and direction, and have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As one parent commented to inspectors: 'My children are proud to be members of this school; it is with confidence that they attend and that I send them in the morning.'

The areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been dealt with. Improvements are evident. The assessment procedures, for example, have been tightened up, and the cycle of monitoring and evaluation has been reviewed to ensure that it captures how well pupils are progressing at key points throughout the year. Middle leaders say that this has really helped them to fulfil their role in a better way and that the accountability and support they receive go hand in hand to improve provision.

Teachers' professional development and support have been strengthened and leaders are focused on continually improving the good-quality teaching that exists in the school. Where variability exists, you have identified this well and are addressing it through sharing good practice. Furthermore, the introduction of the school's own 'excellent lesson' approach to learning has made a significant impact where it has been implemented consistently. Your own monitoring records correctly indicate that the quality of teaching is continuously improving.

Your thorough knowledge of the quality of provision at the school means that you know that there is scope for improvement in mathematics. Pupils continue to reach broadly average standards in this subject but are capable of doing better. You have not used as an excuse the challenges in terms of leadership and staffing that have occurred, rather you have made significant changes to strengthen the capacity of leadership within this subject. You have also increased the number of teachers and classes and devoted more time for teaching. As a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress in this subject than in the past.

You have similarly strengthened the leadership and staffing in modern foreign languages. Your entering of all pupils is testament to your resolve that all pupils should continue to learn a modern foreign language up to Year 11.

Another improvement evident is the provision for the most able pupils. Again, you recognise there is some inconsistency; however, your actions to address these are already working. You were able to identify throughout my visit how you have already begun to improve the provision for the most able pupils.

You and your leaders are appropriately challenged and supported by the governing body. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school and fulfil their responsibilities with dedication and thoroughness. There is considerable skill and experience within the governing body, which will help you to make the improvements you have identified. Governors want the very best for this school and they have made, and will continue to make, decisions that they believe are in the best interests of the pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your good leadership ensures that pupils feel safe and are safe. You and your leaders have ensured that effective practices are in place and the links that you have with external agencies are strong. All staff receive appropriate and regular training and you make sure that checks on new staff are thorough. The pupils show a wide knowledge and understanding of what constitutes keeping safe in its various forms: for example, e-safety, sexting, radicalisation and extremism. Pupils say that bullying is rare and if it were to happen it would be dealt with quickly.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and the records are detailed and of a high quality. You are well aware of the need to further secure the access to the site and have made sure that these areas are fully staffed.

Inspection findings

- Attendance continues to be well above average. It is clear that the pupils enjoy coming to school. The pupils are invariably well mannered and show high levels of respect to each other and to their teachers. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is low.

- The behaviour of pupils is excellent. The school has a very clear behaviour policy and the school's own logs show that any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with according to the policy.
- The school's own records of the quality of teaching show that teaching continues to improve steadily. Where teaching is variable in quality, a bespoke package of support is provided. Records show that this support is effective.
- Where inconsistencies in following school policies occur, leaders act quickly. Recently, middle leaders have taken more responsibility for quality assurance in their departments.
- The standards that pupils achieve at this school have been maintained. There are examples of exceptional performance in some subjects, for example biology, chemistry and religious studies.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers is not as wide as that found nationally. The school's own assessment information shows that the gap is closing further.
- A number of parents' responses singled out the quality of the support their child receives from the learning support department. One parent described the staff to inspectors as 'a breath of fresh air who pick up on my child's needs before he knows them himself'.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils was identified as a real strength in the last inspection and continues to be. The Christian ethos of the school permeates every aspect of school life. There are many opportunities for pupils to make a significant contribution to the wider community through the numerous local, national and international charitable projects.
- There is a strong global dimension to learning which expands pupils' horizons, develops their understanding of other faiths and cultural perspectives, and helps them to understand the importance of British values.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements already begun in mathematics continue to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should in this subject
- the most able pupils reach the standards of which they are capable of, given their starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, members of your senior leadership team, six governors, including the chair of governors, and a group of middle leaders. We conducted a number of learning walks and also visited the Year 6 induction assembly. In addition to looking at pupils' work in lessons, we scrutinised a sample of pupils' books to evaluate their learning. We spoke to pupils informally and formally throughout the day. A range of documentation was considered, including information about pupils' progress, your own self-evaluation and monitoring documents, and the school development plan. The school's safeguarding policies and practices were scrutinised including the single central record and other records. We took into account the 43 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 42 written comments sent to the inspection team. We also considered the school's own survey of parents and pupils. We reviewed the 47 responses to the online staff survey and the 15 responses to Ofsted's online Pupil View.