

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 March 2019

Mrs C Matthewman
Bowes Hutchinson's Church of England (Aided) School
Bowes
Barnard Castle
County Durham
DL12 9LG

Dear Mrs Matthewman,

No formal designation inspection of Bowes Hutchinson's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Following my visit to your school on 12 March 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about outcomes for pupils at the school.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I also met with you, the chair of the governing body and five governors and representatives of both Durham local authority and the Church of England diocese of Leeds. I examined a wide range of documents, including external assessments from both the local authority and the diocese, about the effectiveness of the school and its leadership.

I visited all three classes at least twice, accompanied by you, to observe learning and, where appropriate, speak with pupils about their views of and attitudes to school. I met separately, and more formally, with a group of eight pupils from across the school to discuss their views of the school. I also listened to Year 3 pupils read and discussed their books and attitudes to reading with them. I also, with you and the assistant headteacher, scrutinised a significant number of pupils' books from across the curriculum. I met with you in your role as special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and also with the early years team. I spoke with parents in the morning and at the end of the day about their views of the school. I also took into

account the school's own surveys of parents and 37 responses on Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View.

Context

Bowes Hutchinson's is a smaller than average primary school with 52 pupils on roll. It serves a diverse and largely rural community. The percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium is well below average. At 44%, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well above the national average. All pupils currently at the school are White British.

Inspection findings

This is an outstanding school where there is no complacency but an awareness of the need for continued effort to ensure that pupils get the very best. Your attention to detail and knowledge of every pupil have ensured that teaching, learning and assessment are very effective, leading to very strong progress.

You lead the school with energy and a clear moral purpose. You know the school exceptionally well and set out your expectations for high standards clearly to staff, parents and carers, and pupils. Staff morale is high. Everyone plays their part and, collectively, does their best to achieve significant success in the school. The open and engaging way that the school works is clearly identified and supported by the vast majority of parents. They feel that the school provides their children with the best possible start in life. They commented very positively on the school's family atmosphere and the accessibility of staff.

Parents of children with SEND hold the school in particularly high regard. One parent told me that she could not fault the school's support for her child and that it 'goes the extra mile, and more' to support him. Your work as SENCo is very effective. You and the school team work hard and relentlessly in support of pupils with SEND. You engage very robustly and imaginatively with outside agencies to ensure that SEND pupils and their families get the support that they need and deserve.

Staff demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge and skill. This is because they are enthusiastic and the school, very effectively supported by the diocese and the local authority, offers many opportunities for staff to develop their skills and knowledge. Learning in lessons moves at a purposeful pace. Questioning by staff of pupils is quietly insistent. It helps pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are open, honest and respectful. As a result, pupils make consistently good progress. They are keen to learn and want to do well. They told me that they love learning.

The work in pupils' books shows strong and sustained progress. It is, generally, very well presented. There were examples, in the sample seen, of the use of worksheets apparently restricting the amount that pupils were able to write in their answers.

This reduced opportunities, especially for most-able pupils, to extend and deepen their knowledge and skills. This occurred in subjects other than mathematics and English.

Reading is a significant strength of the school. Phonics is well taught. Pupils have many opportunities to read together to explore how writers create mood and effect in their writing. Pupils welcome this. There is clear evidence in pupils' writing books of the positive influence of reading on pupils' own writing. They also like the structured approaches to individual reading that the school offers. Many of the attractive displays around the school emphasise the importance of reading and celebrate authors.

In mathematics, pupils make excellent progress because they apply well-learned and established routine calculation skills to help them solve increasingly complex problems. Pupils enjoy mathematics. They work hard. I saw pupils in class three exploring, through discussion, a range of possible routes to solutions, encouraged by their peers and staff, before settling for their final answer.

The 'formal' curriculum is very well supported by a wide range of extra-curricular and sporting activities. These are open to all pupils. You have also developed in pupils a developing sense of their roles as citizens in Britain and across the world. You have established strong links with schools abroad, in countries such as Vietnam and Russia. Staff and pupils keep in touch via the internet. These contacts not only provide rich opportunities for discussion, reflection and writing, they also help give your pupils insights and understanding of other societies, cultures and ways of life. Pupils told me that they really enjoy this aspect of the school's life.

Pupils' strong and sustained spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is assured by a range of in- and after-school opportunities. Pupils live out the school's strong Christian values in practical community and charity work. You make sure that tolerance is actively promoted and sustained. Different cultures are celebrated to enhance pupils' experiences. Collective worship is a key aspect of life at the school. Pupils participate fully and respond thoughtfully to questions and invitations to reflect. Their behaviour is impeccable. The school's reward and support systems focus on individual and community responsibility and the need to help each other. Every pupil has a peer mentor and is a member of a family group consisting of pupils from every year.

Governors are evaluative and energetic. They demonstrate a strong knowledge of the school, its pupils and staff. They have a clear understanding of the outcomes pupils achieve and use external validation carefully, as well as their own visits to the school, to check that high levels of performance are maintained. They possess a significant range of skills and they carefully audit what skills they will need as the school develops. In recent months, they have recruited colleagues with useful and relevant experience to focus even further the support and challenge that they offer the school. Governors are well placed to secure further improvement. Governors see

themselves, rightly, as champions of the school's role in its local setting. They support and encourage the wide range of events that the school runs for parents and the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The systems for checking the suitability of visitors and staff recruitment are strong. There are rigorous checks in place to assure staff's suitability to work with children. You ensure that all staff and governors are well trained and skilled in safeguarding matters. There are regular training sessions to keep staff informed and up to date. You are well supported by the designated safeguarding governor in this aspect of the school's work.

You have created, and maintain, a culture in the school where staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and of the procedures that keep pupils safe. As a result, staff can promptly identify, and appropriately support, potentially vulnerable pupils. You, as the designated safeguarding lead, engage very effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the support that they need.

Pupils have many opportunities to learn, and understand, how to stay safe through the subjects they study, class time and during assemblies. Pupils told me that they regularly learn about how to stay safe in a range of situations, including when online and out and about.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further extend pupils' opportunities to write at length in a range of styles to suit a range of audiences.
- Further extend and deepen pupils' experience of the wider curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector