

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



18 December 2017

Mr Michael MacCourt
Headteacher
Barley Lane School
Barley Lane
St Thomas
Exeter
Devon
EX4 1TA

Dear Mr MacCourt

Short inspection of Barley Lane School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 2017 with Gill Hickling, 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you provide inspirational leadership. By sharing your vision, 'hard work, humility, kindness', staff learn from your calm, respectful, but also assured and assertive style. Conversations are carefully designed to ensure that pupils receive messages that help them to feel more positive than they may have ever felt before about their education. As a result, pupils and their families are hopeful for their futures.

Staff take time to make sure that they know pupils very well. The day starts with a detailed, frank discussion with the entire staff team together about the day ahead. Possible risks are discussed and staff agree key strategies that are designed to ensure that pupils achieve success. Pupils are then welcomed to the day with firm affirmation and encouragement. A wealth of activities are available which help pupils to start in a positive way. They can let off steam in a supervised physical game of football or basketball or, in contrast, begin their day with a short game of pool or quietly reflecting, somewhere quieter. Then, staff skilfully support pupils to come together to discuss the coming day. Each teacher provides a motivating comment, highlighting a positive message. This helps to confirm and reinforce the sense of trust, respect and belonging that permeates the school.

You are committed to providing feedback both to pupils and to your staff team. You carefully analyse every aspect of the school and skilfully use this information to

promote further improvement for the benefit of pupils. Governors are able to use this wealth of information to discuss and challenge effectively. You help emerging leaders to develop their experiences, confidence and skills. They work diligently to support their colleagues. The staff team stands solidly with you. Many expressed thanks for the guidance you provide. We agreed that this emerging leadership team, including middle leaders, is now ready to take an even wider role in evaluating aspects of the school's effectiveness.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and continues to improve. High expectations prevail. Staff carefully choose curriculum areas that interest pupils. For example, pupils were thoroughly engrossed in learning about aspects of astronomy in science. As a result of this careful planning, pupils thrive in lessons. They apply themselves and work hard. Lapses in behaviour occur occasionally. However, when they do, staff quickly respond and the situation is quickly de-escalated. As a parent described, 'I don't worry about the telephone ringing any more. When it's the school, they are ringing to give me good news about how my son has done today.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The key to the safe environment stems from the strong and trusting relationships that exist between pupils, their families and staff. Parents are well supported and communication is a strength of the school. Any complaints made are meticulously investigated and documented. Following any incidents, leaders ensure that lessons are learned and staff receive detailed feedback as appropriate in order to reduce any similar incidents. Staff also receive good information about a wide range of safeguarding issues and these are kept relevant through frequent reminders. There is a culture of care and vigilance. Leaders seek advice and support from a range of agencies as needed. Rules to keep pupils safe in school, for example around the use of mobile phones in school, are respected. Attendance is carefully checked. Leaders make sure that they follow up any pupils who are not in school. Everything possible is done to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- We looked at how well school leaders ensure that pupils' individual aspirations, as described in their education, health and care plans, inform learning plans. Staff are really clear about pupils' needs and they adapt plans very effectively to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Alterations are frequently made to the organisation and content of the curriculum. Lessons are suitably challenging and little time is wasted because transitions are carefully planned. The flexible approach supports pupils' achievement and, as a result, pupils work hard and take pride in the work they produce. Older pupils benefit from successful work experience placements that prepare them well for their next steps.
- We also explored the strategies that staff use to make sure that pupils improve their behaviour. The key to this is the successful relationships formed and the care that staff take to understand pupils' actions. There is a safe and secure learning environment because of the careful consideration of the organisation of

staff and pupils throughout the day. Nothing is left to chance and staff continually remind pupils of the rules that keep them safe. They do this in a friendly, positive way and pupils respect this. Pupils reflect on how much their behaviour has improved since joining the school.

- Staff morale is high and there is a real sense of joint purpose and teamwork. You create an environment where staff feel trusted and respected. As a result, they are keen to 'go the extra mile'.
- We looked at your analysis of attendance and how well you are working with families to ensure that pupils attend well. Leaders check and analyse attendance extremely carefully. No stone is left unturned to ensure that pupils are safe and that they have good, or at least improved, attendance.
- We also explored how leaders and governors are ensuring that there is good capacity to secure further improvements. Governors are experienced and skilled. They have a good understanding of the school and use data increasingly well to provide appropriate challenge to leaders. We discussed the very detailed information that is available, including the wide number of documents on the website. We agreed that ensuring that data are presented in a straightforward, clear way would help parents to find information about the school more easily.
- Governors are also aware that continuing to build the responsibilities of leaders across the school is a key next area for development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders contribute more often to the evaluations of the school's effectiveness
- information on the school's website is presented more clearly.

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

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with several parents at the start of the school day as well as observing pupils arrive and settle to their learning. Together with senior leaders, inspectors observed learning in classes across the school. During these learning

walks, inspectors spoke to pupils and looked at pupils' books and folders. Inspectors met with a range of leaders during the day. Conversations took place with representatives from the local authority. A number of school documents were scrutinised, including documents related to the progress pupils make, examples of reports to parents, information about pupils' progress, and documents related to safeguarding and attendance. A meeting took place with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.