

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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



8 December 2015

Mrs Vivien Baker  
Headteacher  
St Charles' RC School  
Knowles Street  
Rishton  
Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB1 4HT

Dear Mrs Baker

### **Short inspection of St Charles' RC School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 November 2015, 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 January 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 have successfully managed many changes, including the appointments of the deputy headteacher and new teachers to almost all classes. A new Chair of the Governing Body has also been appointed. You are using the expertise of new staff well. The new staff team works together and shares best practice constructively. The school's values, which include respect, friendship, pride, caring, responsibility and determination, are modelled by staff and respected by pupils. Positive relationships underpin the school's work and help pupils to grow in confidence. You have all worked together to create a vibrant school community where pupils are happy, enjoy learning, make good progress and are safe.

The last inspection report praised your clear sense of direction and the shared ambition and drive of staff. You have maintained this strong impetus for improvement and commitment with the current staff team. Staff are energetic and work hard to make learning fun and interesting. Pupils also benefit from a broad range of additional activities, which enrich their learning.

The last inspection identified the following areas for improvement: pupils' progress in writing, the effectiveness of marking, and communication with parents of children in the early years. You have tackled these successfully. Pupils currently in school are making at least expected progress in writing. They make particularly good progress

in grammar, punctuation and spelling because these aspects are taught very well. Pupils write for a range of purposes across different subjects, so they develop competency in different types of writing. The quality of feedback provided to pupils has improved significantly. There is some very effective practice in Key Stage 2, where teachers' feedback provides pupils with very precise advice to improve their work or correct errors. Older pupils are very good at helping each other to improve their work because they are given very clear guidance on what a successful piece of work should contain.

Parents of children in the early years are very positive about the changes that have been made to improve communication. They say, for example, 'we enjoy Family Friendly Fridays where we can see children interacting in the class and speak to the teacher about their progress.' The colourful weekly newsletter with photographs of activities and information about events keeps parents well informed about how they can help their children at home.

You set high expectations for teachers' performance and pupils' achievement and staff and governors share your high aspirations. Leaders are aware that there are a few areas that require further improvement. For example, you have rightly identified that there is some unevenness in pupils' progress from class to class and that occasionally teachers' feedback is too general to enable pupils to know how to improve their work. This inspection also identified the need to develop the roles of subject leaders further and ensure that children who need to catch up are helped to do so quickly. The next steps are outlined in more detail at the end of the letter. You are already taking effective action to make sure pupils' progress becomes more consistent. Leaders, governors and staff have good capacity to sustain further improvements.

The vast majority of parents are extremely positive about their children's experiences. I spoke with many parents at the school entrance and have taken account of seven written responses and 24 responses to 'Parent View', the online questionnaire for parents. Typical comments from parents include: 'My children are flourishing and I have only good things to say about the school', 'the school is well run, with particularly strong leadership from the headteacher', 'staff are knowledgeable and caring', and 'we feel part of a school family and enjoy participating in after-school events, fairs and shows'. This inspection confirms these positive views.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of high quality. Appropriate checks are carried out for all staff, external sports coaches and teachers and volunteers. Safeguarding and behaviour policies are up to date and all staff have received training and know what to do if they have any concerns.

Only two pupils completed the online questionnaire but I spoke with many more pupils during the inspection. Pupils said they feel very safe because they are cared for well by staff and because children are 'friendly and kind to each other'. Pupils

have a good awareness of different types of bullying and say that it is extremely rare. There have been no reported incidents of bullying or racist behaviour in the last three years. Pupils said there are rare occasions when pupils call each other names, but that these incidents are dealt with quickly and fairly by staff. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when they use the internet and how to keep themselves healthy.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and governors have in-depth knowledge of the strengths and areas that require further development. Your accurate self-evaluation provides a strong foundation for improvement planning. You are taking appropriate action to make sure the school continues to develop.
- Teachers' performance is managed well. You have set challenging targets to raise pupils' achievement and make sure that strong performance is rewarded. Professional development supports school priorities for improvement and enables staff to carry out their roles successfully.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance and provide rigorous challenge and good support for leaders. The Chair leads developments in governance effectively. Governors make a strong contribution to the positive environment and are ambitious for the school.
- Subject leaders carry out their roles with enthusiasm and have an understanding of broad strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. New leaders are still developing their roles, for example in gaining an overview of standards and progress in each class.
- Staff inspire pupils with their energetic approach and by planning activities that are matched well to pupils' abilities. Many take on extra responsibility, for example in running after-school clubs and in teaching additional sports and music, and pupils benefit from these greatly. All staff share your high aspirations for the pupils and the vast majority are enthusiastic and highly motivated. However, a very small minority of staff raised concerns about workload and say they find the 'paperwork' overly demanding.
- Pupils say they enjoy learning because lessons are fun and activities are mostly planned well to provide the right amount of challenge. Teachers make good use of resources, including information and communication technology, to stimulate pupils' thinking and illustrate ideas.
- Phonics teaching (about letters and the sounds that they make) is well organised. The small-group sessions support children to develop successful early reading and writing skills.
- Pupils' attainment in assessments at the end of Year 2 has increased steadily since the last inspection. In 2015, an above-average proportion of pupils attained higher levels in reading and mathematics. Attainment in writing improved and was in line with the national average.
- Attainment at Key Stage 2 dipped in 2015 to broadly average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. The vast majority of pupils, including those who were disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, made expected progress from their starting points. However, a lower than national proportion made better than expected progress.
- The dip in standards in 2015 has been tackled and the majority of pupils are

now working at age-related expectations or above in each year group. Pupils currently in school make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across each key stage. There is still some unevenness in different year groups, however; progress is slower, for example in Years 1 and 3. Pupils who need to catch up do not always do so quickly enough, especially in writing, early on. You are tackling this effectively with changes to staffing and professional development.

- The school provides well for pupils with disabilities, those who have special educational needs and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. These pupils receive effective support in the classroom and in small groups.
- Pupils enjoy a broad range of subjects and make good progress in their knowledge and skills across the curriculum. They achieve particularly well in sports and music because teachers enthuse them in these subjects. Pupils in Year 6 were rightly proud of their recent win in a local basketball tournament.
- Pupils behave with consideration around the school and are well mannered. They look after the environment and take care of each other when they play outside. They are happy to come to school and attendance is high.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning in most classes. Older pupils work with concentration and make good use of thesauruses, dictionaries and information technology to research and improve their work. Occasionally, pupils lose concentration in some lessons lower down the school because teaching does not capture their interest fully.
- Children in the early years are happy to come to school and feel safe. They make expected and sometimes better than expected progress from their various starting points. The proportion achieving a good level of development has increased over the last three years to be in line with the national average. The teacher's enthusiasm and positive relationships with children create an environment where children can be spontaneous and grow in confidence.
- Children enter the Reception class with a range of experiences and some have knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age, especially in language and literacy. There is a need to ensure children can catch up quickly from these starting points.
- The school is outward looking and buys in support from the local authority. This has proved effective in keeping the school up to date and providing effective support and challenge for leaders.
- You are using your skills effectively to support the development of leadership in other schools through the Diocesan Catholic Leadership Programme.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders who are new to their role develop an overview of pupils' progress and standards in each year group, for example through analysing pupils' work against National Curriculum age-related expectations
- children who enter the early years provision with limited experience are helped to catch up quickly

- the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress increases in each year group.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Salford, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you, teachers and teaching assistants, the Chair and five members of the Governing Body and the school's local authority adviser. I spoke with pupils during lessons and in a meeting. I spoke with many parents at the start of the school day and took account of 24 responses to Parent View and seven written responses. I visited classrooms to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. I looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and at your self-evaluation and action planning. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, training, safeguarding checks and record keeping.