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Mrs Trish Grogan
Headteacher
St Peter and St Paul's Roman Catholic Primary School
Pilkington Street
Bolton
BL3 6HP

Dear Mrs Grogan

Short inspection of St Peter and St Paul's Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 December 2015 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. This visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 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 been appointed as headteacher since the last inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body has also taken up their role fairly recently. Senior leaders are well organised and under your guidance have a firm understanding of what needs to be done to make the school even better. You undertake regular and rigorous self-evaluation that takes into account the views of parents and pupils, along with evidence from observations and analysis of assessment information. Consequently, you have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. You act upon your findings and are driving improvement at a pace. The governing body is well informed and, with you, has set high expectations for the work of staff and pupils alike. Everyone knows that only the best is good enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's arrangements for making sure that children are kept safe are effective. The single central record of the checks made on behalf of governors to determine the suitability of adults to work with children is up to date and complies with statutory requirements. Governors insist that all staff sign an annual declaration indicating no change to their personal circumstances which would compromise their

professional status and the safety of the pupils. As the designated person for child protection, you have attended appropriate training about the 'Prevent' strategy and how to spot the signs that a child may be subject to forced marriage or female genital mutilation. You passed on your knowledge to the rest of the school staff at the start of the school year. You are currently updating the safeguarding policy so that the written document reflects the school's good practice.

Pupils' attendance is monitored carefully by staff and you have secure systems in place to follow up pupils' absence. Moreover, records relating to the work being done with pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are meticulously kept. A number of members of staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid. School activities are risk assessed, as appropriate, by members of staff leading them. Risk assessments are subject to further scrutiny by you so that all the potential hazards have been identified and control measures put in place.

During discussions, pupils told me that they are well cared for in school. Their positive opinions are echoed by the responses to both the pupils' and parents' questionnaires, with most pupils and all parents expressing the opinion that pupils are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- You have united governors and staff behind your vision, encapsulated in the school's mission statement 'Growing in faith together and holding God's hand... We dream, believe, achieve'. This provides a common sense of purpose to the school's work and instils determination in the staff that all pupils will reach their potential.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing, their evaluation informed by the views of parents, pupils and the local authority. This enables you and your colleagues to identify the school's strengths and development priorities and then act upon them. As a consequence, senior leaders promote improvement effectively.
- Leaders and managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. This enables them to hold teachers to account for the quality of their classroom practice and informs the training programme for teachers. As a result, teaching across the school is effective in promoting pupils' progress and their love of learning.
- The governing body is a knowledgeable group of individuals that provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge to senior leaders in their drive to improve the school. Governors are regular visitors to Saint Peter and Saint Paul's; this enables them to collect first-hand evidence of the school's work and hold senior leaders to account.
- Governors have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and how teachers' performance links to pay. For example, teachers applying to

progress along the upper pay scale have to make a representation to a committee of governors before their application can be approved.

- The school website, a useful source of information for parents, is well structured and attractively designed. However, some of the information on it is out of date. Senior leaders are aware of this and are making appropriate amendments in line with regulations.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with a broad and balanced range of learning experiences, which pupils say they find interesting. Year 6 pupils, for example, have researched the life of two prominent women in society: the Queen and Malala Yousafzai. This topic captured pupils' imaginations, inspiring them to write some engaging and interesting factual accounts. The range of themes covered in lessons effectively promotes British values and fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- In those lessons we visited, teachers displayed good subject knowledge. This enabled them to plan well-organised and structured lessons with activities that built one upon another to further pupils' learning. However, evidence from these observations and the work seen in pupils' books indicates that the most-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, particularly in mathematics. As a result, this group's progress can be inconsistent.
- Leaders and managers recognised that the level of challenge pupils received in mathematics was sometimes affected by limited opportunities to apply their learning, solve problems and carry out investigations. Adjustments to the mathematics curriculum have been made to broaden pupils' learning in these ways and thereby accelerate their progress.
- A new assessment scheme has been introduced in mathematics in order to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding quickly, so that they can be given extra help. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this initiative on accelerating pupils' progress.
- Teachers successfully employ a range of strategies to enable pupils to engage with their learning. This maintains pupils' interest, making them willing and active participants in their lessons.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and they make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. This was clearly in evidence in a phonics session that I visited during the inspection, where pupils were able to accurately apply their understanding of the sounds that letters make to spelling similar-sounding words.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and in accordance with the school's policy.
- When asked, pupils are clear about their targets in each subject. These targets are helpfully expressed in terms of what the pupil needs to do to further their learning. Furthermore, pupils' target cards act as constant reminders, enabling pupils to focus on the improvements they need to make in each subject and so accelerate their progress.
- Staff take every opportunity to celebrate pupils' work and reinforce the school's mission and values through vibrant and colourful wall displays. Accordingly, the

school presents as a warm and welcoming place of learning with children at the centre. The clean, tidy and excellently maintained school buildings attest to pupils' care and respect for their learning environment.

- Throughout the inspection, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning were exemplary. As a result, the school is calm and a purposeful place of learning but, as emphasised by the pupils, a fun place to be. No pupils have been excluded from the school during the past four terms. You have compelling evidence that excellent behaviour is the norm in school.
- Pupils I met during the inspection clearly relish the opportunities afforded them to take a full and active part in the life and work of the school through their roles as prefects and playground leaders. These responsibilities make a positive contribution to pupils' developing maturity and help younger pupils to feel safe and secure.
- Pupils told me that bullying at St Peter and St Paul's is extremely rare, but when it does occur it is dealt with very effectively by the staff. This reinforces the views of parents who responded to the school's parents' survey, none of whom have any concerns about the behaviour and welfare of their children.
- Although attendance and persistent absence have been key concerns for the school in the past, strategies to improve attendance are bearing fruit. Currently, attendance for the whole school has improved by 1.4 percentage points in comparison to last year; at 96.3%, it is now just above the national average for all primary schools.
- Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 1 from starting points that are typically low. For example, in 2013, just over a quarter of children had reached a good level of development by the time they entered Year 1. As a result of effective teaching across Key Stage 1, two years later at least 50% attained at the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The attainment of pupils in the Year 1 phonics screening check was broadly average last year. However, when the information is analysed by groups, the attainment of boys and disadvantaged pupils was well above the national figure for both groups.
- The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils was particularly encouraging last year. From their varying starting points, the proportion of this group of pupils making and exceeding the progress expected of them was similar to that of all pupils across the country. This provides convincing evidence of senior leaders' effective use of pupil premium funding.
- Disappointingly, pupils' attainment and progress in reading declined last year. This was due to the weak performance of a few pupils who had low starting points. School leaders are aware of this and are taking effective steps to redress the balance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers consistently plan to meet the needs of the most-able pupils, making sure that they are suitably challenged in all their lessons, particularly in mathematics
- senior leaders update the website regularly, so that parents have the required information available to them about the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bolton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I held separate meetings with you, members of the senior leadership team, members of the governing body and a group of Year 6 pupils who eagerly shared with me their opinions about the school and together we examined the work in their books. I held a meeting with a representative of the local authority and had a telephone conversation with an education adviser from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford.

You accompanied me on a tour of the school where we visited a number of classes, enabling me to observe the staff and pupils at work. This tour also afforded me the opportunity to examine the work in pupils' books and evaluate the quality of teachers' marking.

I scrutinised the single central record. I examined school policies, evaluated senior leaders' assessment of how well the school is doing and checked the day's register to ensure that it was compliant with statutory requirements. I evaluated the quality of the school's website to determine its compliance with statutory regulations. I considered reports on the school's performance carried out by officers of the local authority advisory team. I evaluated the views of 99 parents that senior leaders have gathered through the school's parent questionnaire. I considered the 164 responses to the school's pupil survey and the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.