

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



2 March 2016

Mrs J Laycock
Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Cookham Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 7EG

Dear Mrs Laycock

Short inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 February 2016, 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 July 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 continued to provide leadership which puts the care of the pupils at the heart of the school's work. Every consideration is made for pupils' welfare, well-being and progress. With the deputy headteacher, you have fostered a culture of continuing improvement where all staff work closely together in order to benefit pupils. You are outward looking and seek support and guidance from a range of external sources to check the quality of the work at the school. Learning together is the norm and the opportunities this brings for personal and professional development are embraced by all staff.

You accurately evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders tackled the weakness in writing identified at the last inspection and took actions, such as ensuring more opportunities for pupils to write at length. This led to impressive improvements, with pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 now performing above the national average. You recognise the need to develop middle leaders to secure continued improvement and strong leadership in depth for the school. New appointments have been made to strengthen pupils' progress in Key Stage 1. You know what needs to be done in order to secure better progress in early years provision. Mathematics teaching needed to be strengthened and you have ensured that staff are receiving training to develop their understanding of how pupils learn mathematical skills.

The school sits at the heart of its faith community and the spiritual aspects suffuse the everyday experience of pupils, from the displays on the wall, to the pupil-led worship and the moments of quiet personal reflection. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is exceptional. They benefit from wide-ranging experiences in and beyond the classroom, such as the dance festival that several classes were taking part in at the time of this inspection. These opportunities ensure that pupils are very well prepared to make the transition to secondary school.

The caring, supportive atmosphere of the school is commented upon by pupils, parents, staff and governors alike, and all groups have complete confidence in the school's leadership. All pupils are thoroughly well known pastorally and academically.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are detailed and of a high quality. A robust check ensures that all visitors are carefully led through the school's procedures on arrival. Pupils are supported by lunchtime supervisors to carefully assess the potential risks in any of their play, and to adapt their games to be safe. Pupils are taught how to keep safe online and about cyber-bullying issues.

Staff have been suitably trained and you have ensured that all staff are clear about their duties with regard to radicalisation and extremism. Staff are aware of the signs of pupils who may be at risk, and this is complemented by their detailed knowledge about each individual. The school site is safe, secure and well maintained.

Inspection findings

- A culture of high expectations for all ensures that pupils and teachers aspire to achieve their best. Pupils exhibit a love of learning. They are keen to know what to do to improve and are very appreciative of their teachers' help.
- Pupils mark each other's work and give helpful and sensitive feedback. This means that they know what to do to improve and have confidence in tackling the next stage of their learning.
- Teacher feedback, both written and oral, helps pupils understand what they need to do to make their work better. Pupils are supported to amend their own work and they confidently tackle improvements because they have a clear idea of what to do.
- Pupils demonstrate resilience in the face of a challenge and take great pride in their work, which is neat and very well presented.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school. Several pupils shook me warmly by the hand and welcomed me to the school. All pupils were friendly and courteous, holding doors open and offering cheery 'hellos'.
- Older pupils are very pleased with the positions of responsibility they hold, such as being a buddy for children in Reception Year. Pupils of all backgrounds mix harmoniously and are respectful and supportive of one another.

- Pupils' conduct in lessons is exemplary. They work very well together and individually, focusing diligently on their tasks and moving quickly and quietly between one activity and the next, closely following instructions.
- You evaluate the school's performance with rigour and accuracy. This means that you are very clear about what needs to be done to secure improvements. You have taken the necessary steps, for example, to support the significant numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Teaching in the school is purposeful, well planned and engages the pupils. For example, in a Year 2 religious education lesson, pupils were learning about forgiveness and were reflecting upon their personal experiences, using recent events at the school to develop their understanding. In a science lesson, Year 1 pupils were learning how to identify the similarities and differences between different animal groups, which resulted in a lively discussion.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils make at least expected progress from their various starting points and many, including the small number of disadvantaged pupils, make accelerated progress. This progress is a result of consistently strong teaching in Key Stage 2.
- The small number of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding achieve well. You have judiciously used this resource to provide additional support for numeracy and literacy through 'the college', the school's provision for pupils who need to catch up. This is giving pupils well-targeted support to improve more quickly.
- The school's grounds are attractive, inviting and used very effectively for both play and learning. Pupils were very absorbed in highly creative play using materials from the 'play pod'. The wide range of resources available to them encourages collaborative working, negotiation and problem solving, and contributes to a very pleasant and purposeful lunchtime. Pupils also benefit from a nearby Forest School, which affords opportunities to develop skills and understanding through outdoor learning.
- The school is vibrant and attractive to walk around, with colourful displays reflecting a wide range of topics including: the period of Lent, works of literature, pupils' own work and information about the clubs and after-school activities that are available to pupils.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum with a very strong religious education thread running through it. Pupils' personal, social and health education is a significant feature, with pupils learning about, for example, the rules for debating, taking care of the school's chickens, and relationships. They are taught to keep safe on the roads and in water.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. They are well trained and clearly focused on improving outcomes for all pupils because they work carefully with teachers to plan appropriate support and challenge.

- Leaders rightly recognised that children in the early years provision were not making strong enough progress in phonics (the sounds that letters make). New leaders have been appointed and the approach to phonics has been totally reworked, placing a greater emphasis on more rapid progress for children. There are early signs that this work is having an impact.
- Assessment information shows children in the Reception Year are carefully tracked so their progress is known accurately. This means adjustments can be made quickly if they fall behind. Teachers are using phonics techniques to sound out instructions, reinforcing children's learning.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language progress well by the end of Key Stage 2 after a slower start in their Reception Year. You know this and have taken steps to ensure that these pupils are given extra help with language from their first days at the school. Similarly, leaders are aware that too few pupils in Key Stage 1 had a totally secure understanding of the steps required to accelerate their learning in mathematics. Leaders have ensured that teachers have regular training to help them develop more secure mathematical understanding for pupils.
- The governing body knows the school well and offers both challenge and support to you and other school leaders. Governors bring a wide range of expertise and skills to their roles. Its members make regular visits to see the school at work so they can check the information they have about the school and hold senior leaders to account. You ensure that governors are given useful information which helps them build an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Parents are overwhelmingly happy with the school. Governors make a point of seeking out their views and the parent council gives regular feedback to the headteacher and governing body. Recently, parents were invited to a phonics workshop to help them support their children's learning at home.
- The academy trust supports the school well through collaborative working. The services of a school improvement partner are valued, particularly in the expertise this brings in school improvement, and the training to improve skills in the teaching of mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the leadership of early years provisions and Key Stage 1 continues to develop to secure better outcomes for pupils
- all teachers build upon their training to develop their skills so that all pupils develop a secure understanding of the mathematics curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Portsmouth, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helena Read
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited nine lessons in the school, six jointly with the headteacher. I spoke with pupils in lessons and looked at some of their work. I observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime. I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of staff and a representative from the trust. I spoke on the telephone with the Chair of the Governing Body and met two other members of the governing body. I considered the responses from members of staff and pupils to their confidential online questionnaires. I took careful account of 54 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the written comments made by parents. I looked at documents, including information about performance management and the quality of teaching, information about pupils' learning and progress, and minutes of meetings.