

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



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Mrs S Waterhouse
Headteacher
St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School
Cole Close
Thamesmead
London
SE28 8GB

Dear Mrs Waterhouse

Short inspection of St Margaret Clitherow Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 October 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 October 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You were appointed on an interim basis, following the retirement of the previous headteacher. You have driven improvements successfully and raised standards of achievement by increasing the capacity of your leadership team and learning from the work of other local successful schools. For example, your recent decision to appoint an assistant headteacher is allowing your deputy to focus more sharply on improving outcomes for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. As a result, their progress is catching up with that of other pupils. You have improved the quality of teaching by making effective appointments and encouraging teachers to learn from one another. You convey an uncompromising determination to sustain a culture of high expectations for all pupils. You ensure that pupils are treated as individuals, whose talents and enthusiasms are recognised and nurtured. Pupils behave well and express pride in their school. They appreciate the improvements you have made to the premises, including the development of the outdoor area for early years children. You have enabled pupils to become enthusiastic and articulate about their learning, so that they can explain precisely how they intend to improve their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are implemented effectively. You recently reviewed the way that a concern about safeguarding is responded to, recorded and reported. The local authority helped you to make sure that the revised arrangements meet the needs of pupils and staff. You ensure staff who are new to the school understand the agreed policies. You decided that staff required further training concerning particular aspects of safeguarding. This is enabling them to understand and respond more effectively to concerns which may potentially occur in your school community. Governors check that records are kept up to date and that appropriate training has been provided.

Inspection findings

- Attainment has risen consistently at the end of each key stage since the last inspection. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has remained above the national average and the proportion exceeding this is rising.
- Many pupils enter the school with speech and language skills below those typical for their age. You verify this by arranging screening of all children by an external speech and language specialist. As a result of effective teaching, nearly all pupils develop into confident and enthusiastic speakers by the time they enter Year 1.
- Almost all pupils achieve the expected level in the phonics check in Year 1. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics compare well with national averages. The proportion of most-able pupils attaining the higher level in reading, writing and mathematics is much higher than the national figure.
- In Year 6, high standards have been sustained. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics has consistently exceeded the national average. The number of pupils achieving the higher levels continues to increase. The school's own information indicates that more than half of all pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015, well above the national average for the previous year.
- The in-school gap between attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others has narrowed in all year groups. School leaders and governors have used additional funding effectively and have well-considered plans to close these gaps further.
- Pupils' work in books and on display demonstrates high expectations and good progress. Pupils' written work on display demonstrates their capability to write for a variety of purposes across the whole curriculum.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make less progress than other groups of pupils, given their starting points. However, training aimed at improving teachers' skills in working with these pupils is making a positive difference. The deputy headteacher regularly checks that the impact of this training on pupils' progress is being sustained. A governor with specific oversight of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs has been appointed. These improvements in leadership are increasing the expectations for what this group of pupils might achieve.

- School leaders and governors have an accurate, well-informed view of the quality of teaching. They have ensured the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been pursued effectively. They have made sure individual teachers' skills continue to develop. For example, teachers nearly always ensure pupils know what to focus on in order to improve their work. They provide helpful written guidance which pupils can understand. They plan time for pupils to respond to this advice. In a small number of cases this guidance is still too vague. When this occurs, immediate progress in pupils' work is not as evident.
- The outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been transformed since the last inspection. Opportunities for children to develop their early skills and satisfy their curiosity abound. However, teachers do not always make sure children know how to make the most of these resources to develop their early skills.
- Teachers say they enjoy the collaborative approach taken to training and development, which includes the effective use of partnerships with successful local schools. As a result, teachers understand what excellent teaching looks like and how this can lead to outstanding outcomes for pupils. New teachers have been appointed who are capable of modelling good practice for others.
- Leaders have sought further training and support to help broaden and deepen their understanding and ability to recognise potential risks to the well-being of pupils. This includes coverage of extremism and female genital mutilation.
- Older pupils have received advice about how to resist the influence of gang culture, which may pose a risk to them. Pupils understand how bullying might occur. They have been taught well about risks they may encounter when using the internet.
- More serious behaviour incidents are rare as a result of closer, more rigorous monitoring by leaders and governors.
- At play and around the school, pupils behave in a safe manner and interact well.
- Governors check procedures and ask challenging questions about safeguarding using a well-planned, systematic process.
- The safeguarding policy has been recently reviewed and provides appropriate coverage of issues, responsibilities and reporting arrangements.
- School leaders have sought external validation of their safeguarding procedures from the local authority. Local authority representatives say they are confident in the school's work to make sure pupils are safe and secure.
- Parents and pupils spoken to are confident in the work of the school to keep children safe. They welcome the open culture of communication and appreciate steps taken by school leaders to make the site even more secure. A very small number of parents who responded to the online Parent View survey are less positive about the school's safeguarding work.
- School leaders use detailed plans for improvement to sustain the drive for excellence. Teachers understand their role in achieving the agreed objectives for improvement. These plans include measurable targets related to outcomes for pupils. However, these targets do not always focus sharply enough on outcomes for different groups of pupils. The timescales for achieving these outcomes are sometimes too generous.

- Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ask probing questions founded on skilful scrutiny of a wide range of evidence. They have taken effective actions to ensure their duties related to safeguarding are met. Governors are following a carefully considered strategy for the succession of senior leadership. They are also ensuring that the capacity of leadership at all levels is being developed well.
- The local authority has provided valuable challenge and encouragement to the school. It has supported school leaders as they have pursued a more outward-looking approach to improvement since the last inspection and following changes in senior leadership.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- All teachers use their improved skills effectively so that pupils with disabilities and special educational needs make at least the same rate of progress as others.
- Teachers continue to learn from one another so that every pupil receives precise, regular and helpful feedback on how to improve their work.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given better guidance on how to use the wide range of resources available to develop their skills.
- Plans for school improvement are sharpened so that timescales are more demanding and measures of success are more specific.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector