

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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Mr Aidan McGovern
Headteacher
St Martha's Catholic Primary School
Field Lane
King's Lynn
PE30 4AY

Dear Mr McGovern

Short inspection of St Martha's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 March, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You lead a school where the inclusion of all pupils is at the heart of the vision shared by you, staff and governors. Given that the majority of the pupils come from a number of minority ethnic backgrounds and that 16 languages are spoken in the school, you and your team do this very well. As one pupil reported very eloquently, 'Having a multicultural school is not a potential source of conflict, it is something to be celebrated'. This is evident in the behaviour of all pupils. For example, in a writing lesson, a pupil confidently read out a poem that she had just written in Polish. After reading the poem in Polish, she then read it again, translating it fluently into English. This was very well received by the pupils and adults in the classroom. At the last inspection, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils was judged to be outstanding. You have maintained this aspect as a very strong feature of the school.

Another reason why the pupils that I spoke to report how much they enjoy coming to school is because of the enriched curriculum that gives pupils many sporting, artistic and performance opportunities. Praise from parents who responded to the online questionnaire included appreciative comments about the many exciting opportunities that the school offers their children. For example, I spoke to pupils who were very enthusiastic about the public speaking competition that they were preparing for. On the day of the inspection, it was World Book Day. The enthusiasm for reading from pupils and adults in assembly was infectious. The number of awards and cups on display is impressive.

It is an exciting time for the school as it prepares to move into new buildings in September. This inevitably comes with some frustrations at this time. Pupils are rather restricted outside because of the building work. Nevertheless, pupils behave sensibly when outside. School leaders and governors have a lot of additional work to ensure the smooth transition to the new building. However, leaders are aware that they must maintain the good quality of teaching and learning, particularly when a significant proportion of the staff are new to the teaching profession.

Safeguarding is effective.

All the procedures and safeguarding requirements are secure. The safer recruitment checks are carried out routinely, logs of bullying incidents are kept and training is up to date for staff. Staff take all the necessary steps to safeguard the few vulnerable pupils when they experience difficulties in their lives. Incidents of bullying and safeguarding are rare. While they are logged adequately, these records could be more detailed and systematic, for example when engaging with an external agency, making clear what was discussed and decided.

Inspection findings

- Most pupils leave the school well prepared with the literacy and numeracy skills required for the next stage of their education. In 2015, by the end of Year 6, standards were above average in mathematics and writing. By the end of Year 2, they were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because most pupils, including disadvantaged and the most-able pupils, make good progress. Nearly all the pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- Children continue to get a good start in the early years. Staff have risen to the challenge of the increased numbers of children that start in the Reception classes. As a result, teaching and learning have been maintained as good. Children are confident and play cooperatively together in the stimulating environment. Consequently, most children are equipped with the literacy, numeracy and social skills that they need to succeed in Year 1.
- Pupils are not as well prepared with the skills needed in other subjects such as science, history and geography. The work set tends to focus too much on the knowledge aspects of these subjects. For example, when doing science work, pupils do not carry out enough experiments. This means that they are not developing sufficiently the investigation skills that are central to the science curriculum.
- Since the changes in the national curriculum and assessment came into force, leaders have established a useful procedure for checking the progress of pupils. This is effective in enabling teachers to track accurately how individual pupils and groups are doing.

- School leaders have successfully addressed the area for improvement identified at the last inspection by accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics. Pupils are developing their fluency with number throughout the school, which has resulted in the above-average standards gained at the end of Year 6. Some teachers, for example in Years 5 and 6, have embraced the importance of teaching problem solving and reasoning, which are essential in mathematics. In some other classes, these are not as well taught.
- Your school improvement plans, procedures for performance management and activities to check on the quality of teaching and learning are not as well linked as they could be. All these activities are taking place, but it is unclear how performance management procedures are ensuring that teachers are making a full contribution to meeting whole-school targets for improvement.
- Pupils' work and handwriting in their books are not as neat and well presented as they could be. Teachers do not insist on high enough standards of presentation, which would enable pupils to show greater pride in their work.
- A number of new governors are conscientiously embarking on training as they are keen to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Rightly, they have high expectations of the school. The inexperience of some governors means that they are less clear about the strategic role that they must take if they are to hold school leaders to account for school improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers instil higher expectations for the presentation of work in pupils' books
- a close check is kept on the teachers who are new to teaching so that their professional development is continuous
- teaching and learning in science, geography and history are more balanced between the knowledge aspects of the subjects and the skills required to become a scientist, historian or geographer
- the strategic role of governors is made clearer.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the curriculum leader, three governors, pupils and administrative staff. Short visits were made to all classrooms where books were scrutinised and pupils and staff were observed at work. A range of documents, policies and assessment information was examined. Questionnaire responses from parents and staff were also analysed.