

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 June 2016

Mr J Entwistle
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
St Austin's Place
Avenham
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 3YJ

Dear Mr Entwistle

Short inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 June 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 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 established an effective team of committed and dedicated staff who are determined to give your pupils the best start in life. Key ingredients to your success are the in-depth knowledge you have of every individual pupil and the way you all work together to ensure that any barriers to success are overcome. Despite many children arriving at the school with skills below those typically expected for their age, the vast majority leave ready and able to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

There is a warm, calm and welcoming atmosphere which permeates every part of your school. Pupils say they enjoy their time at St Augustine's and that they are safe and happy. Pupils are polite and well-mannered and show respect for adults and for each other. They work together well and their attitudes to learning are strong. Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils and have high expectations of them. You ensure that pupils' needs are met well, both academically and pastorally, making sure that pupils are always in the best position to learn. You are skilled at making sure that support for learning is targeted where it is needed.

At the previous inspection, inspectors noted that pupils' achievement and attainment in key stage 1 needed to improve. You have effected this improvement. At the time of the previous inspection, by the end of key stage 1, pupils' reading

and writing skills were significantly behind those of other pupils of the same age. Since then, you have targeted improvements in these subjects, and as a result, pupils' reading and writing skills are now broadly similar to other pupils of the same age.

The previous inspection report also noted that the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) to younger pupils should be more rigorous. This now takes place on a daily basis and the organisation of pupils into focused groups means that they are learning more effectively. You have also linked pupils' learning of letters and sounds to their early reading and writing development as these were related subjects that needed improvement. The result of changes made in these areas is that more pupils are now able to pass the national phonics screening check in Year 1. Although this shows an improvement, you understand that there is still more work to do to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils develop the relevant skills to pass the phonics check in future.

The final improvement requested by previous inspectors was to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects. This is an ongoing focus for you. The work I saw in topic and science books shows that pupils now have wider opportunities to write at length.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and reflect the most up-to-date government legislation. Records are detailed and of high quality, such as the recording of checks taken to ensure that any adults employed at the school are suitable to work with children. You have ensured that staff training to keep pupils safe is completed regularly and that leaders receive training in the safe recruitment of staff. Staff complete detailed risk assessments before embarking on any trip or visit and these are only sanctioned when you have reviewed the safety arrangements. Your work with pupils and families who are vulnerable is thorough and any incidents or issues are quickly followed up. Outside agencies become involved where necessary. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and the vast majority of parents agree.

Inspection findings

- Leaders know the school very well and you identify accurately its strengths and areas that need improving. Your planned actions for improvement are appropriate and are focused in relevant areas. Your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness is also accurate. You have demonstrated how your actions have had a positive impact on the overall effectiveness of the school, such as the improving outcomes of pupils at the end of key stage 1. Your school development plan incorporates many strategies to effect ongoing improvement but these are not focused sharply enough on what targets you are trying to achieve. This would assist leaders and governors in measuring your success along the way.

- Teaching across the school is characterised by strong, caring and nurturing relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers are skilled at targeting help and support where it is needed. For example, those who are in most need of help receive intensive support to assist them to catch up quickly. Work in pupils' books shows that they are making good progress overall from their different starting points. Teachers mark pupils' work as expected by leaders and evidence in books shows that marking has a good impact on pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils; consequently, they listen carefully and are keen to learn. This was observed clearly during an English lesson in key stage 1 where pupils were learning the story of 'The Three Little Pigs'. Pupils listened to the story outside the classroom and when they returned to class, they could not wait to pick up their pencils and write. They knew exactly what to do and were full of ideas.
- All members of staff know which pupils are disadvantaged and what their learning needs are. You have regular meetings with teachers to check on the progress all pupils are making and the progress of this group of pupils is carefully monitored. Where they are not making the progress you would expect of them, you are quick to find out why. You then seek to remove any barriers pupils might have in achieving their potential. Evidence shows that the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others are closing, but we agreed that there is still more work to do to close the gaps even further.
- Children enter the early years with skills below those typical for their age. There are significant barriers to learning, not least for the increasing number of children who have yet to master the English language and some children who have no understanding of it. You have risen well to overcome these early challenges faced by your children. You have appointed staff who work closely and regularly with the children who need most support with language. These staff understand English as well as the native language of these children. You have also invested heavily in improving the early years setting to provide better opportunities for children's learning. The setting is bright and welcoming and the outdoor learning area has also benefited from recent investment. We discussed how the outdoor area could be further improved by increasing children's opportunities to develop their language and mathematics through exploring letters, words and numbers. Teaching arrangements in the early years have also been adapted so that support is targeted where it is most needed. All of these improvements have meant that the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development by the time they leave Reception is starting to rise. Indications are that a higher proportion of children will meet the standards expected of them this year. Although the proportion of children meeting the expected standards in learning by the end of the early years is below that seen nationally, from their generally low starting points, pupils' progress overall is good.
- Pupils' behaviour is a key strength. Around school, in classes and outside, behaviour is consistently good. Pupils spoken to say that they enjoy school and that other pupils usually behave well. When there are occasional lapses in behaviour, pupils say that these are quickly dealt with by staff. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and those who responded to one of your recent parental

surveys, agree that you make sure that pupils are well behaved. This was further confirmed by the parents I spoke to on the morning of the inspection.

- Governors are regular visitors to the school and are well known by staff and pupils. They complete their own checks on school effectiveness, for example they visit subject leaders to discuss developments in their subjects and how well pupils are doing. They also attend 'working parties' regularly which provide further opportunities for staff to explain how things are progressing. You provide regular updates for governors so they have the correct information at meetings in order to support and challenge you to continuously improve. Records from meetings show clearly how governors question proposals to make sure that you remain on the correct improvement path. Governors have recently completed a skills audit so they have people of particular expertise in the most appropriate committees, providing support and challenge. Although governors are well informed of how additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent, they are less secure about the exact impact of this spending on closing gaps in attainment.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- targets for improvement are more clearly defined in school development plans so that leaders and governors can more easily monitor progress towards intended improvements
- the outdoor environment in the early years is further developed so that children have similar exposure to letters, words and numbers outdoors as they do indoors
- the impact of your work to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils continues to be monitored closely so that gaps close further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Lancaster and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hardman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and middle leaders. I also met with five governors. I spoke with pupils informally, both in and outside of classrooms and I also spoke with an adviser from the local authority. I considered a wide range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding, minutes from governing body meetings and information relating to pupils' progress. I visited every class with you to observe teaching, to speak with pupils about their learning and to check progress in books. I considered 20 responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' questionnaire and considered the results of your own questionnaire which had 155 responses. I also spoke to three parents who were dropping pupils off at school. The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.