

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 October 2016

Paul Campbell
Interim headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Chiswick
Duke Road
Chiswick
London
W4 2DF

Dear Mr Campbell

Short inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Chiswick

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have sustained a positive working culture where pupils are keen to learn and know the importance of behaving well. As a result, pupils work together sensibly in class and respect the views and ideas of others.

Leaders and governors have tackled weaknesses found in the early years provision at the time of the previous inspection. Most children now make rapid progress and achieve the expected level by the time they leave the Reception class. Information on how well children are making progress is used effectively to plan what they need to learn next. You make sure that activities are purposeful and engaging. For example, during the inspection, children developed skill and confidence when balancing on the ladder on the climbing frame. Others learned to share and take turns sensibly, when designing and building a church using building blocks. While there are more writing activities available indoors and outside than in the past, there are occasions when opportunities are missed to encourage children to develop their writing. As a result, this area of learning lags behind the others.

Leaders have made improvements in teaching across the school, enabling pupils to make good progress most of the time. Your teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are to learn. For example, the pupils in Year 6 found their individual targets in speech bubbles on the backs of their chairs to be informative and helpful.

You have been successful in maintaining above-average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Pupils from various backgrounds and from differing starting points do well over time. Reading is a particular strength in literacy. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check has risen year on year and is above the national average. The most able pupils read with great expression and show an in-depth awareness of what makes a character good or not.

While pupils also do well in writing overall, there are weaknesses in their spelling and handwriting. Teachers provide guidance on how pupils can improve, but these aspects of writing do not improve quickly enough.

The school provides a wealth of information for parents and carers on the school website. However, leaders and governors do not check rigorously enough that this information is kept up to date and make sure that the most recent information is made available to parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders ensure that all adults working in school have received up-to-date training to support them in looking after the pupils. Members of staff are checked for suitability and are clear about their roles in keeping the pupils safe.

Pupils know to take care of themselves around the school and when using the internet. I observed that pupils play together safely and amicably. Pupils are emotionally well supported and include one another in games so that no one is left out.

I could see that pupils knew that you have high expectations for their behaviour, and this helps them to stay safe at school. Pupils were able to tell me ways that they can keep themselves free from harm, such as 'Look at the traffic both ways' and 'Don't go on unsafe websites'.

Inspection findings

- I looked at how well pupils are making progress in their writing because assessment information suggested that pupils did less well in this subject than in reading and mathematics. You have already identified this as one of your next steps for the school in your school improvement plan. You have clear plans to follow the successful model you used when you developed reading. I found that while there was no particular group of pupils who did less well than others in writing, pupils often make mistakes in their spelling, and their handwriting varies in quality. Some of the spelling mistakes are due to a lack of care and others are because pupils do not use their knowledge of common spelling patterns to help them with unfamiliar words. Teachers frequently correct pupils' work and make suggestions on how they

should improve, but pupils do not always follow this advice quickly enough. I noticed that pupils often use interesting vocabulary in their writing and use description well to help engage their audience.

- I observed disadvantaged pupils working in class and saw that these pupils were represented evenly across ability groups and made similar progress to their peers. In the published information about attendance and pupils' attainment in 2015, I noticed that disadvantaged pupils did not do as well as other pupils at key stage 1, and their attendance was weak. The weakness in attendance represented a very small number of families and did not include the most able disadvantaged pupils. I could see that you are taking the right steps to encourage all pupils to attend frequently and to be punctual. For example, where appropriate you seek 'a buddy family' to provide support for those who are finding it difficult to bring their children to school on time. As a result of the work you do to reduce absences, rates of attendance are high.
- Pupils do well in reading, and attainment and progress are strong. The proportion making more than the expected progress was a comparative weakness in 2015. You have been working on improving progress in reading, especially for the most able, with obvious success. I enjoyed sharing books with pupils from Years 2 and 6. They all told me that they enjoy reading and you have clearly established a culture where reading is appreciated. You work well with your parents so that pupils read frequently at home as well as at school. Pupils use their knowledge of phonics to help them to tackle unfamiliar words and they read with understanding and sensitivity. For example, pupils in Year 6 showed compassion when talking about the characters in their stories and how they should behave in a given situation. You have developed some very capable readers and the majority of the pupils I met were appropriately challenged. A few of the most able pupils are not always fully challenged by the books they are reading.
- I explored how well the culture of your school keeps pupils safe and how well you communicate what you do at school with your parents. However, before the inspection some of the information on your website was out of date. Nevertheless, all the members of staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire agree that the pupils are kept safe. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the 'Parent View' questionnaire agreed that their children feel safe at this school. In informal discussions, several parents specifically mentioned safety as a strength of the school. Typical comments included, 'The children are kept very safe' and 'Safety is second to none'. The pupils I spoke to during the inspection all said that they feel safe at school and know what to do if they have a concern. Some of the parents I spoke with at the start of the school day told me that communications between the school and home have improved since the previous inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils improve their spelling and handwriting and make sure that they follow up the teachers' guidance in a timely manner
- the information provided for parents is monitored rigorously so that it is kept up to date.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The key lines of enquiry for this inspection were to:

- explore how well various groups of pupils (across the school) are doing in writing and check the impact of assessment and guidance on improving their work
- check that differences in the attainment and attendance of disadvantaged pupils are diminishing, especially at key stage 1
- see if leaders' actions are increasing pupils' progress in reading, especially for the most able
- look at how effectively leaders are ensuring that the culture for safeguarding is robust, communicated with parents and having a positive impact on pupils' safety.

Evidence collected on inspection included:

- observations of teaching and learning in all classes during learning walks with the headteacher and deputy headteacher
- meetings with leaders, other members of staff, a member of the local authority and members of the governing body
- informal discussions with parents and the scrutiny of 124 responses to the Ofsted 'Parent View' questionnaire
- consideration of a range of information supplied by the school, including the school's own information about how well pupils are achieving, planning documents and checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan and records relating to attendance and safeguarding procedures
- pupils from Years 2 and 6 were heard to read
- the scrutiny of questionnaires from eight members of staff.