

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 December 2016

Mrs Jacqueline McNally
Headteacher
Our Lady and St Gerard's Roman Catholic Primary School
Lourdes Avenue
Lostock Hall
Preston
Lancashire
PR5 5TB

Dear Mrs McNally

Short inspection of Our Lady and St Gerard's Roman Catholic Primary School, Lostock Hall

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 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. The school has continued to improve since then as a result of your determination that all pupils will be well cared for as individuals and in their learning. You, together with your colleagues, have made sure that the faith-based ethos of the school underpins its positive and constructive values. Your expectations of members of staff and pupils are high and this means that they work hard to be successful. Those members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online inspection questionnaire said that they enjoy working at the school and recognise that it helps pupils to make good progress.

Parents who spoke to me were very positive about the school and the opportunities it provides for pupils. Most parents who responded to Parent View were similarly favourable about the school. A number highlighted the gains in confidence that the school has helped their child to make. Comments such as 'school leaders and teachers have gone above and beyond to ensure [...] has settled in' and 'my child enjoys going to this school, and has made brilliant progress', were common. However, some parents raised concerns, particularly about communication with school and the space available compared to the number of pupils. You have ensured that the school has increased its contact with parents, for example through the learning mentor and by offering meetings with parents about specific topics. Pupils I spoke to were proud to belong to the school and said that they learn a lot.

In 2016, the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics check was above average, continuing the improvement seen in recent years. While the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 reaching the expected standard in 2016 in reading, writing and mathematics broadly matched the national average, fewer pupils than typical achieved greater depth in these subjects. Over time, pupils, including the most able, make good progress from their different starting points. They leave key stage 2 with attainment which is similar to that seen across other schools in reading, writing, mathematics, and spelling, punctuation and grammar.

You make sure that pupils' progress is carefully checked at key points throughout the year. This allows you to evaluate how well pupils are learning and teachers to adjust their teaching to ensure that pupils' rapid progress continues. Your analysis of pupils' achievement is honest, allowing you to identify, for example, the less rapid progress in key stage 1 and to take action to speed it up. You know that the development and learning of children in the early years is faster than at the previous inspection and judge it to be good. Parents of children in the early years commented to me about the good progress they feel their children make.

Teachers' monitoring of, and individual planning for, disadvantaged pupils is particularly detailed. Such pupils, including those who learn more quickly, make progress at similar rates when compared to others. Their attainment is often a little lower than others as they typically have lower starting points. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very low. These pupils are very well supported and achieve in line with other pupils.

You have adjusted the school's curriculum since the previous inspection. You have made sure that there is a good balance between the core subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics, and other subjects such as French, physical education and science. There is no sense that these other subjects are an 'afterthought'. For example, the school provides a specialist teacher for French and it has achieved the Primary Schools Quality Mark in Science, confirming that science provision is of a suitably high standard.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that the school needed to accelerate pupils' progress through higher expectations, better planning and more demanding targets. In addition, they advised the school to strengthen subject leadership.

You, together with other leaders and governors, have ensured that these aspects have been addressed:

- Expectations are high across the school and one of the ways teachers respond to this is in their effective planning for learning. A new system, developed by the local authority, has been successfully introduced to allow teachers to set more demanding targets and track progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This also allows staff to confirm that learning is at least as fast as typically seen in other schools.

- You have ensured that leadership across the school has been strengthened. Governors have appointed an assistant headteacher. This has allowed senior leaders to provide more challenge for each other. In addition, you have created opportunities for teachers to improve subject teaching across the school, for example in science and history.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has well-established systems in place to ensure that safeguarding is rigorous. The school's child protection policy is based on a model provided by the local authority and is easily available on the school's website. Staff are fully aware that any issues which concern protecting children are of the utmost importance and there is a culture of not letting any such issue rest until it is resolved.

Staff and volunteers are well trained concerning the different aspects of safeguarding and visitors to the school are carefully checked before they have access to pupils.

The pupils I spoke to felt safe in school and their teachers and other staff agreed. Pupils' welfare is increased because they know an adult in school they can turn to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils said that there were occasional 'fall outs' between pupils but these were rarely bullying. They were confident that any such issues would be resolved.

The school has appointed pupils from Years 5 and 6 to be 'digital leaders'. These pupils receive training and then work with younger pupils as part of the school's strategy to make sure that all pupils know about the risks they might face when they are using computers or other social media devices. Pupils across the school are confident that they know about staying safe online.

Inspection findings

- Governors and leaders have undertaken honest and accurate school self-evaluation and prepared a suitable school improvement plan. However, this plan could link more incisively to the self-evaluation document and include sharper targets, for example about pupils' achievement in key stage 1 and for those of middle ability.
- You and the wider staff team share a determination to improve the school so that pupils can be successful academically and in wider aspects. This is based on positive values which arise from the school's faith background.
- You ensure that the staff team continues to develop through well-planned opportunities for training. This is frequently in partnership with other local schools. The partnership work of the school extends to your significant role in supporting other schools in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford. A small number of parents commented to me that this means that you are sometimes not available in school. However, there is sufficient capacity within the senior leadership team to ensure that the school continues to be well led even if you are elsewhere.

- The governance of the school is effective. The governing body has recently been reconstituted as the school has changed from being the responsibility of Ampleforth Abbey to that of the Diocese of Salford. Governors provide challenge and support to you and to other leaders. They manage the school's finances well and have been able to provide additional classrooms since the previous inspection. They continue to seek ways to improve and extend the school buildings.
- The school has a well-organised approach to collecting and analysing information about pupils' progress. This information is well used by leaders and teachers to ensure that pupils learn rapidly. Pupils' outcomes continue to improve.
- Approaches to teaching are effective. Leaders check teachers' work closely and systematically. You have recently introduced a new programme of lesson observations and other activities to let leaders do this. Teachers have common expectations and approaches which give pupils confidence in their learning.
- Pupils enjoy school and want to be there. Attendance is high, although relatively lower for disadvantaged pupils. The learning mentor's work is successfully helping attendance to increase further, particularly for pupils whose families find it harder to engage with the school.
- Pupils behave well. They are friendly to staff, visitors and each other. They know what is expected and try hard to reach the school's high standards. Older pupils are willing to take on responsibility, for example as buddies who help to look after younger children during breaktimes and as the 'digital leaders'.
- Many parents regard the school's work highly. However, a minority are less satisfied. Such parents' concerns are often about how well the school communicates with them in general or about specific matters. The school provides regular opportunities for parents to meet with staff and holds information meetings about, for example, e-safety.
- Leaders and teachers have successfully improved the teaching of reading in the school. There have been year-on-year increases in the phonics check scores for Year 1. I heard pupils confidently using their phonic skills to help them read unfamiliar words. Despite the pressure on room space, leaders and governors recognised the importance of providing a library, although this space also continues to serve as a computer room. Leaders ensure that pupils' standards in reading and writing are checked against those in other schools through their work with other local school leaders.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in mathematics. Your mathematics leader has introduced a new subject curriculum which includes opportunities for more practical activity. In addition, the school has recently adopted a new calculation policy. Both of these are adding to pupils' achievement in mathematics.
- The curriculum is well planned and effective. It is broadened by other activities and experiences for pupils. The school has recently hosted a residential visit for Chinese pupils and their teachers. Pupils told me how interesting this had been and how it had helped them to understand that people are the same even if they seem different. This project has

contributed to the school's recognition as an international school.

- Provision in the early years gets children off to a good start in their learning at school. They enjoy the activities provided, which stimulate and interest them. However, the resources available are less attractive in the outdoor areas and particularly for Reception. Children's starting points are in general below those typical for children of their age. However, they make rapid progress and have frequently caught up by the start of key stage 1. Parents are highly supportive of the opportunities that the early years offers. The early years education provision has been extended since the previous inspection by the introduction of a Nursery class run by the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- information from the systems for checking that pupils are making progress as quickly as possible is better used to shape the school's improvement plan and to set sharp targets for the achievement of pupils in different groups, including those in key stage 1 and of middle ability
- the school's work to engage with parents develops further so that the number of parents who feel that communication with school is not effective, or who have other concerns, reduces
- the outdoor areas in the early years, and particularly for Reception, are improved to provide for children's best possible learning and development.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, and other members of staff to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with governors and a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese. I met with a groups of pupils and talked with others around the school and during lessons. I observed teaching and learning in classes across the school and heard a small group of pupils read. I examined documents including school's records about safeguarding pupils, the self-evaluation document and the school improvement

plan. I considered 75 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with 46 additional written responses from parents as well as the views of parents gathered as they brought their children to school. In addition, I scrutinised the views of 21 members of staff provided through their questionnaire.

As part of this inspection, I considered five lines of enquiry:

- How effective are leaders, including governors, in ensuring that the provision offered is as good as possible?
- Why is there inconsistency in the historic outcomes data?
- How effective is leadership and provision in the early years?
- How effective is provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- Are safeguarding procedures in the school up to date, robust and effective?