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2 March 2017

Miss Andrea Connearn
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Dear Miss Connearn

Short inspection of St Hugh's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2017, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide highly effective leadership and have an accurate understanding of what is working well in the school and what needs improving. You and school leaders successfully address the challenges presented by an exceptionally high number of international new arrivals. You respond promptly and flexibly to the arrival and departure of pupils at any point during the school year, and you ensure that pupils settle in quickly and begin learning straight away. You have established an inclusive school and this is reflected in the pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour. Pupils appear happy, engaged and excited by learning. The few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire made it difficult to ascertain the views of parents. However, the small number to whom I spoke were positive about the school. You and your deputy have been successful in stressing to all teachers their role in ensuring that all pupils continue to make good progress. Staff feel well supported and challenged to make the school even better and morale is high.

Governors know the school well. They have a good understanding of its strengths and the areas to improve. Governors share your ambition and determination to improve further the outcomes for pupils. They challenge and support you in equal measure and do not shy away from asking you difficult questions. With you, they hold staff to account for their performance. Governors are aware of their statutory duties and carry them out effectively. For example, they are well informed about the funding to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and they know how

it is spent. With you, they regularly review the impact of this expenditure on improving outcomes for pupils.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to make sure that the teaching of phonics met the needs of all pupils. You have successfully addressed this by training all staff in the teaching of phonics. You have introduced targeted phonics groups in Reception. The number of pupils meeting the expected standards in phonics by the end of Year 1 is improving and school data shows that a higher percentage of pupils are on track to meet the expected standards this year. You were also asked to improve overall attainment in key stage 1 and provide greater challenge to pupils. As a result, you deployed stronger teachers in key stage 1 and this has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Although attainment is still below national averages, pupils are now making good progress in all subjects from their very low starting points. You rightly identify that pupils could be making even more progress and that further challenge is needed to ensure that increasing numbers of pupils reach the expected standards. Since the last inspection, attendance has improved each year. Effective systems are in place to monitor persistent absentees and this is having a positive impact. In spite of significant improvement, attendance is still slightly below the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and school leaders know the school well and are alert to the specific risks faced by pupils both within and outside school. Provision is made to minimise all potential risks. You rapidly take action and work effectively with parents to ensure the safety of your pupils. For example, your 'walking home alone policy' clearly sets out your expectations of parents when collecting their children.

School leaders and governors recognised that the absence and persistent absence of girls was a safeguarding issue. Therefore, you employed a community support worker, who closely monitors pupils' attendance.

The recording of all safeguarding concerns is well organised, detailed and up to date. The records are of a high quality.

Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding children. Recent training has included input on female genital mutilation, forced marriage and extremism. School leaders and staff do not have the attitude, 'It's not going to happen here.' Instead, they accept that concerns for children's safety could occur anywhere and at any time. Consequently, they are vigilant in all aspects of safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- Many children enter your school unable to understand or speak English. Furthermore, a substantial proportion starts and leaves the school at other than the usual times. Nevertheless, you have successfully developed a highly effective and flexible range of strategies to help the children settle quickly into school and

to make good progress from their very low starting points. Current school data indicates that pupils make good progress and that the year-on-year trend shows increasing numbers of pupils making good progress. All pupils, including the small minority for whom English is their first language, make good progress from their starting points.

- The range of interventions in place to accelerate the development of English language skills is effective. Opportunities to use language and literacy were evident in all classrooms and around the school. For example, during a practical mathematics lesson in Year 1, staff expected and encouraged all pupils to use spoken English.
- Teachers are aspirational for their pupils. The pupils' learning and behaviour in lessons is excellent. Pupils are engaged and concentrate well on a range of skilfully planned, practical tasks that help them to develop socially as well as academically. For example, during the visit, Year 2 pupils were learning about volume in mathematics by pouring, measuring and reading labels from a range of healthy drinks and fruit juices. They were having great fun.
- School leaders work collaboratively with the nursery school and children's centre within the federation. This has resulted in more pupils entering Reception already having attended Nursery. There is now greater stability in Reception and, in the current Reception class, 83% of pupils joined at the start of the school year. The progress of pupils in Reception from their very low starting points is good.
- The impact of strategies to accelerate progress in reading from low starting points on entry to key stage 1 and key stage 2 was the third key line of enquiry. School data shows that pupils are making good progress in reading in all year groups. There is a strong focus on the teaching of reading throughout the school. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about reading and were excited about the new library. They said they loved books and read books written by a range of authors. One key stage 2 teacher reported that pupils now express a love and desire for reading. Phonics teaching is now closely targeted to the needs of pupils. This is raising standards in phonics in Reception and key stage 1.
- Across the school, robust tracking systems are used to highlight when pupils are not making good progress so that interventions can be rapidly started. Lower-attaining pupils, or those falling behind, are targeted for additional reading support. This has resulted in pupils making rapid gains in reading. For example, after a one-term intervention programme, the reading age of one Year 5 pupil improved dramatically from 7 years to over 9 years.
- Overall, pupils' work demonstrates good progress for all pupils from their starting points. However, the pupils who have attended the school consistently are generally on track to meet age-related expectations and are making very good progress. From time to time, there is a lack of challenge for this group of pupils. They are sometimes presented with the same work as others. Also, the books read by the most able pupils are on occasion insufficiently challenging.
- There is rigorous and systematic monitoring of pupils' progress that includes data on mobility of pupils and their English language abilities. This means that senior leaders are able to identify and explain factors that have affected rates of

progress. These factors are not used as an excuse but to demonstrate the need to take further action.

- A range of parental-engagement activities is in place and take-up is increasing, particularly in the early years. For example 'share a story' sessions are sensitively planned so as not to exclude those parents who do not speak English, or struggle to read. In spite of this range of activities, parental engagement remains a concern. The school recognises that more could be offered to support a greater number of parents in their attempts to learn English. This would enable parents to join in more confidently with school activities and help their child with school work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that further challenge is provided for all pupils, especially the most able
- create and implement a programme to address the development of pupils' English language skills that extends beyond the basics to more advanced skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Loftus
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to talk about the improvements which had been made since the last inspection. I looked at all safeguarding records and explored your recruitment and vetting procedures. I held discussions with the following: two governors, including the vice-chair of governors; your local authority school improvement partner; the Reception teacher; the special educational needs coordinator and three subject leaders. We visited all key stage 1 and 2 classes together and looked at a sample of Year 2 and Year 6 writing books. I also visited the Reception class. I heard four pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I also had a discussion with six pupils from Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6. I observed lunchtime play and informally spoke to a number of pupils about behaviour in and around the school. I looked at the pupil, staff and parent survey results and considered the comments.