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Mrs Maria Woolaway
Headteacher
Our Lady's RC Primary School
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Herefordshire
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Dear Mrs Woolaway

Short inspection of Our Lady's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Pupils are making above expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave in Year 6 as a result of improved teaching and very effective monitoring. Outcomes are also improving strongly in the early years, science, and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Parents and staff responding to surveys have an overwhelmingly positive view of your leadership.

As a result of good leadership:

- You, other leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas that need to improve further.
- The distributed and shared leadership team has extended the school's capacity to improve further.
- Rigorous monitoring of teaching has led to improvements in previous weak teaching and consequently outcomes in early years and key stage 1 are improving strongly.
- Phonics is consistently well taught, leading to high outcomes at the end of Year 1.
- Attendance of pupils is very high and persistent absence is low.
- Pupils' behaviour is of a very high standard throughout the school.

At the time of the school's last inspection, inspectors praised the relentless drive for improvement shown by you and the deputy headteacher. This had resulted in significant improvements to teaching, pupils' achievement and behaviour. Despite a dip in outcomes following that inspection you have worked well with a range of external partners, including the local authority, to get the school back on track and have now ensured that outcomes are improving rapidly again.

Inspectors in the last inspection report said the school should ensure that teachers give pupils more opportunity to talk in lessons about their learning to develop the vocabulary and language they need to make faster progress; set, share and update learning targets with pupils so that they are all clear about how well they are doing and how to improve; expect pupils, especially the most able pupils, to act on teachers' advice and guidance about their learning and to make the necessary improvements to their work independently. They also said that leaders should use the information the school collects about individual pupils' progress with more rigour to identify throughout the year whether different groups of pupils and pupils in every class are making the progress they should.

Pupils talking about their learning is now well established in lessons, which is proving especially beneficial to the increasing number of pupils in school who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils know from their targets how they are doing and how they need to improve. The most able pupils are doing particularly well in school as a result of increased challenge and opportunities to work in greater depth. Monitoring and analysis of pupils' outcomes by group and year group are detailed and inform pupil progress meetings, where teachers are held to account for their pupils' outcomes.

Behaviour is a strength of the school. In lessons and around school pupils behave very well and have good relationships with each other. There is a calm, purposeful ethos and leaders provide opportunities to encourage pupils to reflect on their actions. There have been hardly any exclusions for many years and the school does well to include pupils who, in rare instances, present challenging behaviour. Pupils reported that while behaviour is good there are a few instances of silly behaviour, mainly from boys, but these are dealt with well by teachers and other staff. Pupils understand the sanctions system well, which they said was effective. Those spoken to were enthusiastic about the rewards which promote good behaviour.

This is not yet an outstanding school. Attainment in reading at the end of key stages 1 and 2 is not as high as it is in mathematics and writing. Disadvantaged pupils, including those who are low attaining, have not previously made as much progress as other pupils in the school. Leaders and governors need to take further account of the views of pupils in decisions taken about the curriculum. Presentation of pupils' work in their books is occasionally not of a high enough quality.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a very strong culture of safeguarding to promote the safety and well-being of pupils in the school. External audits, including from the local authority, have further confirmed that this is a strength of the school. Staff and governors are very well trained and fully up to date with the latest guidance and updates. Staff are consistently reminded by leaders to be alert to, and report in writing, any concerns they have, however insignificant they may appear to be. Governors make thorough checks to ensure that leaders meet their responsibilities and duties. Pupils reported that they feel very safe in school and this was supported by all the staff and parents who responded to questionnaires.

Inspection findings

- Arrangements for a shared headship, with the deputy headteacher acting as headteacher for two days a week, have strengthened the leadership capacity of the school by enhancing monitoring of teaching and tracking of pupils' progress. Middle leaders have also taken on enhanced responsibilities for monitoring teaching and learning.
- You, other leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. When pupil outcomes fell soon after the last inspection you were not afraid to take on additional external support and challenge, including from the local authority, local headteachers and other external consultants and partners. This outward-looking approach has led to rapid improvements in the last three years.
- You have also not been reluctant to make difficult decisions around staffing changes. This has led to better teaching as leaders' expectations and challenge for teachers have been increased. All teachers are now held to account through pupil progress meetings. The wealth of pupil progress information broken down by year and pupil group ensures a high degree of challenge in these meetings, which are also conducted by middle leaders.
- Governors are well informed and bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and commitment to their role. They are actively engaged in the daily life of the school and are highly ambitious for its future success.
- In the surveys all staff who responded strongly agreed that they are proud to be a member of staff at the school. The very large majority of parents responding said they would recommend the school to another parent. Almost all pupils who responded said there was an adult they could talk to if something was worrying them.
- The most recent tests and assessments at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 showed that pupils had made rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their low starting points at the end of key stage 1. Pupils achieved above-average outcomes in mathematics, science, English grammar, punctuation and spelling and broadly average outcomes in writing. In assessments at the end of key stage 1 pupils achieved above expected outcomes in mathematics and writing.

- According to information provided by the school and work seen in pupils' books during lessons, pupils across all year groups are making very strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics, including those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils in school who are disadvantaged are now making accelerated progress, including the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Outcomes in the early years have much improved in recent years as a result of closer monitoring and changes in staffing. In 2016 the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above average, having been below average in the two previous years. This represents rapid progress as children join Reception at typically low starting points and many are new to speaking English as an additional language.
- Teachers plan well for different groups of pupils and ensure that the most able pupils are challenged with more demanding and open-ended tasks. Teachers track groups of pupils carefully and they deploy additional adults effectively to provide additional support.
- Phonics is well taught so that outcomes at the end of Year 1 are consistently high. Leaders recognised that in recent tests and assessments at both key stages 1 and 2 pupils did not do as well in reading compared to other subjects, especially the increasing proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. These learners could successfully decode text using their recently acquired phonics skills but found it more difficult to read for inference and understanding. Outcomes are now improving strongly in reading as a result of an emphasis on teaching comprehension, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils' attainment in reading was below the national expected standard at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in the most recent tests and assessments. A small number of disadvantaged pupils who are low attaining, and who are making expected progress, are doing so from very low starting points and so do not go on quickly enough to diminish the difference in attainment with other pupils nationally in reading.
- Levels of attendance have continued to rise and are on a three-year rising trend. Persistent absence is also very low. The school is relentless in challenging absence. Leaders have set challenging targets to improve attendance further.
- Pupils spoken to did not feel that they were sufficiently involved in helping make decisions about the curriculum, for example over the choice of topics studied. They also felt that some subjects, such as French, were not taught frequently enough.
- Pupils' presentation of their work in books is not of a high enough standard at times.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a higher proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and low attaining make more rapid rates of progress in reading so that the difference in attainment with

other pupils nationally can be more quickly diminished by the end of key stage 2

- they take greater account of the views of pupils in planning the curriculum
- pupils' presentation of work in books is of a consistently high standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you, the deputy headteacher, other senior members of staff and five members of the local governing body including the chair. I also spoke by telephone to a member of the local authority. I visited parts of five lessons, observed jointly with you. I also observed pupils as they moved around the school. I met with a group of pupils. There were 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 19 responses to Parent View by free text. I also took account of 72 pupil survey responses and 16 staff survey responses.

During the inspection, I focused on the progress and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and low-attaining pupils in reading at key stage 2, teaching of reading, including for pupils learning English as an additional language, how effective the arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are and how well attendance is managed.