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Mr John Riley
Headteacher
St Chad's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mr Riley

Short inspection of St Chad's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 March 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 January 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, your governors and staff work hard as a team to create a caring and welcoming school where children are happy and enjoy their learning. Parents are very supportive of the school and your leadership. They feel that they are listened to and appreciate the extra support and guidance they receive as families. Staff are proud to work at St Chad's, commenting: 'There is an amazing team spirit here, creating an environment where our children are cared for, encouraged and given every opportunity to reach their full potential and personal best.' Indeed, all pupils and parents would recommend St Chad's to somebody moving in to the area.

The school's Catholic ethos permeates throughout the life of the school. Your motto of 'sharing, caring and learning together through Christ' is seen through pupils' positive interactions with each other, through the mutual respect between pupils and staff and through the tolerance and empathy shown by pupils to those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils talk with compassion and are proud of the charity work they undertake. Pupils raise money for a wide variety of charities, both locally and abroad. Pupils have fundraised for a local children's hospice, been 'mini vinnies' for the St Vincent de Paul charity and walked a mile for Syrian refugees and Save the Children. Leaders carefully plan these activities so that they are meaningful and give pupils opportunities to reflect; for example, the 'walk a mile' was undertaken

carrying rucksacks, blankets and holding the hand of a younger sibling or pupil to help pupils identify with the plight of refugees. Pupils are taught to be tolerant and welcoming to all, regardless of their differences. This spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school.

Governors, senior leaders and staff have taken action to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. In securing improvements to the quality of teaching across the school, robust procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching over time are now in place. You monitor this through a comprehensive quality assurance schedule. Teaching and learning is triangulated through lesson observations, data, work scrutiny, planning information and ongoing discussions of pupil progress. Staff are ambitious to improve and are willing to be creative in their delivery of the curriculum. A recent development has been the drive for more focused learning outside of the classroom. Subject leaders are building outdoor activities into schemes of work so that pupils will receive a varied and enriched curriculum.

In response to improving writing for all pupils, especially for the most able pupils, you rightly focused on engaging pupils with their writing, and this has been effective at all key stages. In 2016, 90% of children in the early years foundation stage met the expected standard in writing. In key stage 1, the vast majority of pupils achieved the expected standard in writing, exceeding national averages. In key stage 2, pupils made good progress in their writing, with high-ability pupils making excellent progress.

You and your governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved further. The school's self-evaluation is honest and clear and leads to improvement plans which are beginning to show impact in all areas.

Governance is a strength. The governing body holds you firmly to account, supports you and is a 'critical friend' to your leadership team. The local authority has also been helpful in evaluating the work of the school with you. You have appreciated this support and used it well to help move the school forward. The governors, local authority and archdiocese are all confident in your leadership ability to continue to improve the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough and fit for purpose. Safeguarding policies are relevant and understood by all staff. Your recruitment checks are sound and meet the statutory requirements. All staff receive up-to-date training and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Leaders know their pupils very well and liaise very effectively with external agencies to make sure that vulnerable pupils are supported promptly.

Pupils report that bullying rarely occurs but, if it does, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Pupils trust the adults in school and say that they would talk to them if they had any concerns, worries or if there were any friendship problems.

Pupils are taught to keep safe, both personally and online. Pupils can talk with confidence about road safety, cyber bullying, healthy eating and how important it is to treat everyone with respect. Pupils, parents and staff have total confidence in leaders' ability to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, governors and all staff are committed to driving further improvements at St Chad's. You provide clear direction to ensure that the school continues to improve. Middle leaders work well together in overseeing the quality of teaching and learning in their key stage. Detailed planning, combined with an in-depth knowledge of each pupil, allows for teachers and teaching assistants to make sure that the needs of individual pupils are well met.
- The early years team have been successful in improving outcomes for pupils so that the majority of children achieve a good level of development above the national average. Through interesting activities, children are encouraged to read, write and use their imagination. Children can make thoughtful connections in their learning. For example, when discussing a reading book about a trip to the moon, one child talked about gravity, which built on the topics studied in their science 'wow' week during the previous week.
- Achievement in the Year 1 phonics check dipped in 2016 but previously was above the national average. Many interventions are now in place to support pupils so that they can achieve the expected standard by the end of Year 2. Small-group work, one-to-one sessions and support from the special educational needs coordinator is carefully coordinated to ensure that interventions are bespoke and tailored to each pupil's individual needs. Sometimes, however, pupils are not moved on quickly enough when they have completed tasks.
- The teaching of phonics is reviewed regularly by leaders so that it meets the needs of different cohorts of pupils. Different resources are used and planned for at appropriate times, multisensory approaches are used with some pupils and booster sessions are in place to make sure that current Year 1 pupils are on track to meet their goals in the phonics screening check. A phonics information evening for parents was led recently and received very positive feedback. Parents are keen to support their children's learning and work closely with the school so that they can reinforce learning at home.
- Staff quickly identify any barriers to learning, such as speech and language needs, and are effective in sourcing external support for these pupils so that their progress is as rapid as that of other pupils.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are engaged with their learning and make good progress as a result. In a Year 1 English lesson, pupils were writing book reviews so that they could then arrange a 'book swap' with other pupils. Pupils were able to describe, in writing, what they liked most about the book to recommend it to others.
- At the end of Year 6, test results compare well to national averages and progress in mathematics is strong. Progress in reading is weaker than that in writing and mathematics, particularly for middle-ability pupils and boys. Leaders have taken

prompt action to resolve this issue by focusing on improving reading across the school.

- Leaders have developed many different activities and strategies to improve reading. Pupils were asked through the school council what their favourite books were, and as a result, the school has invested in buying new, engaging texts. The approach to reading lessons across all year groups is consistent and staff model good reading for pupils. Local bookshops, visits from authors and reading have a positive impact on instilling a love of reading among pupils.
- Tracking information and lesson observations show that the majority of pupils are now making good progress in reading. Outdoor reading dens and tepees are being developed to further engage boys. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy their reading.
- Attendance of pupils is good. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils was a cause for concern in 2016 as it was significantly below the national average. However, leaders have worked closely with families and external agencies to improve the attendance of individuals. Current attendance information shows considerable improvements for this group of pupils. This work of leaders, together with families, is making a positive difference.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to develop the outside learning provision to maximise the impact of this on promoting the independent learning, resilience and investigative and questioning skills of pupils
- continue to ensure the stretch and challenge of pupils so that pupils make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points, further developing the breadth of their knowledge.

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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the special educational needs coordinator and the lead teachers for key stage 1 and English. In addition, I met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and

talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You accompanied me on visits to all classes, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance and the school's assessment data of pupils' progress and attainment. I also scrutinised a range of policies and minutes of governing body meetings.

I also undertook a review of the school's website which complies with government regulations. As part of the inspection, I considered 48 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, one letter from a parent, ten responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 60 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I also spoke to parents informally on the playground.