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Mrs Carole Partington
Headteacher
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Dear Carole Partington

Short inspection of English Martyrs' RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 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 March 2013.

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 is friendly and harmonious. Expectations of staff and pupils are high and are reinforced by systematic approaches, for example in the consistent display of learning materials in classrooms and in the organisation of breaktimes. The pupils I spoke with said that they enjoy their work and being part of the school's community. They behave well and work hard in class. You make sure that the available space is used well and have plans to further improve the buildings.

There have been a number of significant changes to staffing since the previous inspection. You are now in your second year at the school and were joined by a new deputy headteacher at the start of this school year. There are also new leaders for English and mathematics and you have established a new leadership team. These changes have been managed well with posts and responsibilities put in place to meet pupils' needs. For example, teachers with particular skills and experience are deployed in classes where pupils' progress has been slower in the past. The school also has a new chair of the governing body.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve the quality of teaching and so speed up pupils' progress by improving their handwriting, making sure that effective teaching led to rapid learning and better using the outdoors in the early years. You have ensured that there is a clear focus on high-quality teaching overall. You make sure that systems, such as allowing pupils to choose the

level of challenge in the work they do and when they are allowed to use a pen rather than a pencil, are built into the school's practice. The opportunities now provided for children when learning outdoors are rich and will soon be improved further. Part of the children's play and learning area is being redesigned for better use, with tricycles and other sit-on vehicles.

In addition, the school was asked to sharpen its approach to improvement planning by making sure that there are clear links between planned actions and the impact that these should have, and how success will be measured. The current school development plan is clear and identifies appropriate priorities. You ensure that plans are reviewed at least every term and that this is reported to governors.

The parents who shared their views were generally positive about the school. They noted the strength of the school's sense of community and the leadership you provide. A small number identified that they felt that the school did not provide enough learning challenge for the most able pupils and that homework was not hard enough. Others felt that the homework set was suitable.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that the arrangements for keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose and that records about safeguarding are thorough. All staff receive regular training on safeguarding and those with particular responsibility undertake additional training. Governors know about their responsibilities and also receive relevant training, such as about the ways to reduce the risk of appointing staff unsuitable to work with pupils.

The school site is secure, with, for example, close supervision when pupils arrive at school and electronic locks on entrances to the site.

The pupils I spoke with said that they felt safe in school and were taught about ways to increase their safety, for example when using computers or other electronic communication tools.

Inspection findings

- The changes in leadership have not slowed the development of the school. You have a clear vision for the success of pupils and are building a strong team to ensure that this success continues. You have an honest and accurate view of the strengths of the school and of which particular aspects staff still have to work on. You are not afraid to seek advice and support to help you provide the best deal for pupils, for example in your recent review work with the local authority to ensure that the school is as effective as possible.
- Governors are experienced and knowledgeable about the work of the school. However, strategic change has been driven by the headteacher. The recent changes in senior staff and the new chair of the governing body provide an opportunity for governors to consider how their role can have most impact in supporting and challenging school leaders. For example, governors could check

more closely that the new school website is complete and best meets the needs of parents.

- Over time, pupils' outcomes in key stage 2 and in the early years have been consistently strong. However, pupils have not done as well in key stage 1. This was particularly the case in 2016. You have carefully considered why this was and have identified that changing staffing was unhelpful to pupils. You have ensured that suitably experienced teachers are in place for younger pupils. Current school data indicates that such pupils are now making faster progress. This was also particularly clear in the sample of books from Year 2 that I examined.
- While the school has a focus on the learning of individuals and groups of pupils, still more could be done to provide further challenge, particularly for the most able. Staff know pupils and their learning well but yet more could be done by class teachers to use the information they have to target their teaching even more precisely.
- Pupils are confident learners. This is supported by your work to help pupils to think about how they learn. Pupils demonstrated this in the way they talked with me about 'mistakes being marvellous' in helping them to improve.
- The school has responded well to the shortcomings identified in the early years in the previous inspection. Provision in the early years is now well organised, with adults effectively steering children's learning through the planned activities. Their continuing conversations with children are now much more effective in promoting learning. I saw Reception class children enthusiastically developing their understanding of money in activities indoors and outdoors, and Nursery children collaboratively making a 'baby's cot' with careful support from an adult. Children have frequent opportunities to practise their developing writing and number skills.
- Attendance is high. This reflects your active approach to encouraging good attendance and pupils' keenness to be in school. Pupils are aware of the high expectations and are involved in considering the impact of absence. For example, the Year 6 class has calculated the difference that one pupil's absence can make to the whole-class figures. If any group of pupils' attendance is lower than others', you investigate this and work closely with the families concerned to encourage the best possible attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent improvement in progress and attainment for key stage 1 pupils continues and becomes embedded over time
- teachers use the available data on pupils' progress to further enhance the quality of their teaching and its impact, particularly on the most able
- the governing body continues its development so that all governors can play a full part in providing continuing support and challenge to leaders and other staff.

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 Trafford. 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, the key stage 1 leader, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, and the early years leader, to discuss the school's effectiveness. I discussed the school's single central record of safeguarding checks with the office manager. I met with the chair of the governing body and another governor. I had a discussion with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others during lessons and at breaktimes.

I toured the school accompanied by you, and observed teaching and learning in classes across the school. I heard some pupils read.

I examined documents including the school's information about safeguarding pupils, the school's self-evaluation document and the development plan. I considered 39 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with 22 additional written responses from parents, and spoke with some parents and grandparents at the start of the school day.