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Miss Claire Halstead  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Sabden  
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Sabden  
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BB7 9ED

Dear Miss Halstead

### **Short inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Sabden**

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There is a warm welcome for everyone. As headteacher, you have established a team full of drive and energy to improve outcomes for your pupils. You have accurately identified what needs to be done to improve the school further, and have been proactive in bringing about the changes necessary to make it happen.

You and your staff have worked effectively to tackle the areas for further improvement identified at the last inspection. Your leadership team feels strongly that, as a small school, it is important to work with other schools in order to set the highest standards for the pupils in your care. You have developed strong links with local schools and your staff appreciate the opportunities they have to share good practice. For example, they work together to check teachers' assessments of pupils' work to ensure that high standards are reached. The continued development of your staff is important to you and you provide training for them to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff commented that they feel respected and valued. Teachers challenge pupils and have high expectations. Pupils are making better progress and an increased number are working at the standards expected for pupils of a similar age nationally throughout school.

You know your pupils and their families well. The vast majority of parents I spoke to during the inspection, and those who accessed Parent View online, commented very

positively about the care you give to their children. Parents of pupils who receive additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities speak highly of the help their children receive and the positive impact this has on the progress they are making. A number of parents who have recently joined the school said that they have been made to feel very welcome. They said that there is clear communication between home and school and their children make friends and settle quickly.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are confident and happy. There is a strong ethos of support and encouragement throughout the school. Pupils follow the school motto of 'kindness, love and respect' with pride. When asked what makes their school so special, one pupil spoken to said: 'We all know each other and look after each other and that's important.' Pupils are proud of their achievements and take pride in their work. They appreciate the help that teachers give them to improve their learning and enjoy the range of after-school sports clubs they attend. The fantastic robots, made at home by pupils with the help of parents, are on display in the classroom of the youngest pupils. This is a clear indication of how well school and home work together to enhance learning opportunities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are robust and staff have a clear understanding of procedures for keeping children safe. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they are listened to and know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe and cared for. They are confident that any issues they raise will be dealt with fairly.

### **Inspection findings**

- Attendance is higher than that of other schools nationally for all pupils. You have successfully tackled the high rates of persistent absence for a small group of pupils. There are a number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who also have additional health issues which impact negatively on their attendance. You monitor the attendance of this group of pupils closely and support these families well. You know your families and the community you serve. If pupils do not arrive in school, you make a call to their home that morning to ensure that the pupils are safe. Pupils travel from a wide area to attend your school. You have introduced a number of incentives that have successfully reduced the number of pupils arriving late at the start of the school day.
- There was a dip in the outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2016. Staff have identified the reasons why not all pupils reached the standards expected of pupils of a similar starting point nationally. Teachers work with other schools to check that assessments are accurate and in line with other pupils nationally. This has enabled them to challenge and support individuals effectively. As a result of the high-quality support they receive, current pupils are making stronger progress from their starting points. This includes pupils who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. The number of pupils in the present Year 6 class is small. Assessment information shows that this year a higher number are on track to reach the expected standards by the end of the year. You acknowledge that you need to further embed the actions you have taken to ensure that higher standards are maintained.

- The majority of pupils attend the local Catholic secondary school in Year 7. You work closely with staff from the secondary school throughout the year. Transition events and meetings ensure that relevant information is shared and pupils settle quickly. Pupils said that they visit the school during the year and meet their new 'buddies' who will be there to greet them when they start in Year 7. Pupils said they are 'excited, a little nervous, but looking forward to moving on to their next school'. The transition arrangements for the few pupils who go to specialist provision in Year 7 are carefully planned to meet the needs of each individual pupil and their families.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the standards expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2016 was below that seen in previous years. You acknowledge that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching during part of the year contributed to this. Your decisive actions have brought about the changes needed to swiftly tackle this issue. As a result, the majority of pupils this year have reached the expected standard for their age. You recognise that these changes need to be maintained to ensure that pupils continue to make better progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have made sure that staff are trained to deliver high-quality interventions. Robust monitoring systems highlight the main focus for the help that pupils need and programmes of support are delivered in a timely manner. Work in pupils' books seen during the inspection, and your school's own assessment information, show that pupils in some year groups are making rapid progress from their starting points. The majority are now working at the standards expected nationally of pupils their age.
- A higher proportion of pupils join the school throughout the school year than join other schools nationally. Leaders assess pupils immediately to ensure that they receive the support they need to settle quickly. Assessments identify any gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders have developed a number of effective interventions to tackle these gaps and monitoring shows that pupils make rapid progress from their individual starting points.
- A number of pupils who join the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your staff work effectively with a range of outside agencies to access appropriate support to meet the pupils' individual needs. You have developed good relationships with your families and work closely to help them to support their children's learning. Parents say that pupils grow in confidence and make progress as a result of the care and support you give.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they embed the actions that they have taken to ensure that higher standards are maintained across the school
- improvements to provision in key stage 1 are embedded so that high expectations are maintained and pupils continue to make good progress from their starting points.

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

Amanda Stringer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and other members of staff. I also met with the chair of governors and two members of the governing body. I spoke with a representative from the local authority. I conducted a learning walk with you and visited classes, where I had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I also listened to a number of pupils read. I met with a group of pupils during the day, spoke with a number of parents at the school gates and took account of the freetext comments on Parent View. There were 21 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised your assessment information, self-evaluation, school improvement planning, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.