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Mrs Mary Morris
Headteacher
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Morris

Short inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Chipping

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 January 2014.

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 strong and caring leadership. You work tirelessly to support staff to improve their development in order to benefit pupils. However, you are not afraid to challenge underperformance and to make difficult decisions. You and your governors use detailed information about the progress of pupils to set challenging but realistic aims for the school. You have maintained a clear focus on improvement and have brought stability to the school after a period of turbulence in staffing. As a result, current pupils benefit from good teaching and you provide an excellent role model for this. You constantly check the quality of teaching and respond to your findings with appropriate support and training.

Teachers plan interesting lessons because they have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. Your pupils are confident in the support given by teachers and say that if they are stuck with something, teachers will 'break down the problem to help you figure it out'. Staff work together as a coherent team and understand the needs of the pupils very well.

You and your team have taken action to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Teachers now regularly check what pupils know and can do during lessons and give swift and accurate feedback. Leaders' sharper monitoring

has ensured that teachers use this regular feedback consistently. As a result, pupils learn quickly and rarely repeat the same mistakes. Teachers also give more attention to moving learning on quickly when pupils have understood a concept. However, at times, learning slows for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics when adults ask them to complete work they can already do before moving on to more challenging work.

At your last inspection you were asked to review the profile of mathematics in school and increase opportunities to apply mathematical skills in other subjects. You have addressed this through the implementation of a carefully constructed curriculum for mathematics and through additional training for all staff. Pupils make good progress in written calculations across the school. They apply their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. They do this particularly well in geography and science. However, teachers give pupils fewer opportunities to investigate numbers and number patterns. This limits the opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth or to attain higher standards.

You are not complacent and recognise that while pupils make good progress, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards in writing and mathematics can be increased across the school.

You have ensured that pupils have access to a broad curriculum. You give pupils opportunities to learn a variety of musical instruments and to perform for different audiences. Sports teams have had several successes and staff provide a wealth of after-school provision in this area. However, this breadth of opportunity does not extend to art or design technology. You recognise that further work is needed to develop pupils' skills in these areas in a consistent way across school. You are aware of this and have already put plans in place to improve this across school.

Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They challenge leaders to ensure that improvements continue. Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development and have made sure that their own development has kept pace with change.

This is a caring school where pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well through the school's faith characteristics. Pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for one another and behave well around school. Adults and pupils care for and support each other well. The school's values are evident in the good behaviour and positive relationships within school.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Parents say that their children love school and cannot wait to get there each day. As a result, pupils' attendance is in line with national averages and improving. Leaders take firm action when attendance dips, including sending letters home and arranging meetings with parents. You stress the need to attend school regularly and use rewards to encourage this.

Adults teach pupils how to stay safe, including when online. Pupils are taught how to stay healthy and enjoy the opportunities they are given to make healthy meals in

school. Pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and communities in Britain and the wider world. You have established a link with another school in a different locality to further enhance this understanding. British values are promoted well and as a result, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and leaders ensure that all safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, including checks on teachers and governors. Training for staff is comprehensive and up to date. The school calls on support from other agencies to help pupils as well as working with the local authority. You demonstrate a determination to ensure that pupils are kept safe and any unknown absences are followed up swiftly. Consequently, all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- Pupils make very good progress in reading. The most able pupils read fluently and with expression. Lower-attaining pupils use their knowledge of phonics to help when they get stuck on a word. Pupils have developed comprehension skills that are appropriate for their age. Pupils enjoy reading and have a range of favourite authors.
- A key line of enquiry for this inspection was about the progress pupils make in mathematics in key stage 2. Current pupils make good progress in mathematics due to the high focus leaders place on this. An increasing proportion of pupils are working at the expected standard with some working above this.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in mathematics which they use to good effect when teaching about calculations. Teachers use their good understanding of the needs of individual pupils to challenge pupils' thinking. Pupils value this, telling me that, 'You get pushed but it's not so hard that you can't do it.'
- Teachers give pupils time to practise and embed their calculation skills. As a result, pupils make particularly strong progress in written calculations. However, although teachers give pupils regular opportunities to carry out word problems, teachers do not routinely teach the skills necessary to do this. There are few opportunities for pupils to explain their mathematical reasoning or investigate numbers. As a result, progress is limited for the most able pupils.
- Another line of enquiry was focused on the progress that pupils make in writing. Current pupils make good progress in writing in key stage 1 and key stage 2. A focus on effective teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling has reaped benefits and pupils now apply this knowledge in their writing to good effect.
- A high proportion of pupils at key stage 1 and 2 are working at the expected standard in writing. Teachers ensure that pupils know what a good piece of writing looks like. Adults carefully develop pupils' writing skills so that some pupils in key stage 2 are working at the higher standards. In key stage 2, pupils are given opportunities to practise and embed their writing skills in geography and science. The quality of the writing in these subjects is equal to that seen in

English books. Consequently, some of the most able pupils in Year 6 are beginning to write with flair. For example, 'Icy wind slashed at his face and the rain danced an evil dance upon his head.'

- In key stage 1, pupils' overall progress in writing is good. However, few make rapid enough progress towards the higher standards in writing. This is as a result of fewer opportunities to write at length to practise and embed skills both in English and in other areas of the curriculum.
- I also looked at the effectiveness of the provision for children in Reception. The early years leader has a good understanding of the needs of the children. Learning is based on accurate assessments of what the children know and can do. As a result of the positive relationships established, children behave well.
- Adults provide a stimulating environment for Reception children with a wide range of interesting activities. Teachers plan for opportunities to develop children's language in all areas. For example, children were planting and watering plants in a flower bed. They had chosen the plants and where to put them. Adults asked children about the needs of the plants and why they were watering them. These questions developed children's thinking. However, at times, adults do not give children enough time to respond to their questions, which limits language and vocabulary development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of pupils in mathematics is further increased, by:
 - developing problem-solving skills across school
 - giving the most able pupils further opportunities to explain their reasoning and investigate numbers
- the most able pupils in key stage 1 increase their progress in writing so that more reach the higher standards
- the curriculum is developed further so that pupils develop their creative skills more consistently across school.

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

Tanya Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, teachers and governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I visited classes to observe learning and you and I looked at work in pupils' books. I met with pupils throughout the day and spoke with four parents in the playground before school. I considered the 12 responses and the eight free-text comments made by parents on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I heard several pupils read and observed pupils on the playground and in the dining hall.