

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



18 October 2017

Mrs Tracy Musgrove
Headteacher
St Oswald's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School
Easington Avenue
Wrekenton
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE9 7LH

Dear Mrs Musgrove

Short inspection of St Oswald's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 October 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

From the time of your appointment, in September 2015, you have worked unrelentingly to ensure that pupils experience a good quality of education. Despite significant staffing changes at all levels since the previous inspection, you have developed a staff team who value your leadership and who share your vision for the school. You are supported ably by a team of motivated leaders who have helped to improve pupils' achievement. You have the highest expectations of all aspects of the school's work and your ambition and determination shines through all that you do.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners who try their best in their lessons and relish the range of opportunities the school provides. They love the new school library and the exciting range of outdoor equipment that they enjoy at breaktimes. Most pupils behave well in school and show respect and tolerance towards others, including those from different faiths or cultures. This was exemplified by one pupil's comment when we discussed attitudes towards people who have disabilities. He stated, 'Well, you would look past the disability and just see the person.'

You and your leadership team are focused, constantly, on improving the quality of teaching in the school. You have eradicated the weakest teaching and provide extensive opportunities for staff to improve their practice through training and visits to other schools. This has led to better outcomes for pupils. The proportion of pupils, including

disadvantaged pupils, reaching the expected standard for their age in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 6 increased in 2017 and was in line with the national average. Current assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils are making strong progress across the school. Improvements to the teaching of phonics, an area identified for development at the previous inspection, have enabled pupils to make good progress. Low prior-attaining pupils now catch up to the expected standard more rapidly.

Leaders have taken effective action to tackle the area for improvement set at the previous inspection to increase standards in reading and writing. The achievement of pupils in reading has risen sharply. Standards in writing have improved across the school and are above the national average by the time pupils leave Year 6. You have correctly identified that more pupils need to develop accurate spelling skills and have set this as a target for the current academic year.

You recognised that some teaching was not enabling enough pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to make more rapid progress to reach the highest standards of attainment. You have already started to take action to address this. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading and mathematics in Year 6 rose. However, in these subjects and in writing, the proportion of pupils reaching the highest attainment still remains just below average. Similarly, by the end of key stage 1, a lower than average proportion of pupils reached the highest standards in reading and writing. You are clear that this remains a priority for the school and have plans in place to address it.

Governors are very committed to the school and are frequent visitors. They know the local community well and are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors challenge the leadership team increasingly and have improved their knowledge of key aspects of the school's performance through accessing local authority training. This has enabled them to recognise that, historically, they have not evaluated the impact of leaders' work rigorously, for example in relation to the spending of pupil premium funding. They know that this needs to improve so that they are clear about what is working well and to enable them to set precise strategic targets for the aspects of the school's performance that need to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that arrangements to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose. Thorough checks are made to verify the suitability of staff to work with children. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Records of safeguarding incidents show that leaders take appropriate action to follow up concerns. They make effective contributions to multi-agency meetings to ensure that pupils and families receive the support they need.

Pupils understand risks to their safety. They can articulate the dangers when they are using the internet and know, for example, that they must check that online applications are suitable for children of their age before they sign up. The school's work to educate pupils about the impact of bullying has ensured that pupils know what to do if such

issues arise. They told me that bullying is rare in their school and that they trust the adults around them to help to address any problems that occur.

Leaders maintain a constant focus on the attendance of pupils. Pupils receive regular rewards for good attendance and swift action is taken to intervene where attendance is low. You have procured support from a neighbouring school to work with families where pupils' attendance is an issue and refuse to authorise absence for holidays during term time. Leaders' work has ensured that the overall attendance of pupils remains in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has reduced and is now close to the national average.

Inspection findings

- You identified that not enough pupils were reaching the highest levels of attainment across the school. Leaders have started to take action to improve the quality of teaching for the most able pupils. A new curriculum for mathematics has resulted in more problem-solving opportunities, allowing pupils to work at greater depth. Staff have benefited from training so that they have a better understanding of what pupils need to do to reach the higher standards. This work is beginning to make a difference, particularly in upper key stage 2, where teachers are demanding much more of pupils. Your regular monitoring has ensured that you have identified the classes in which the most able pupils are not challenged rigorously enough. Further training is in the pipeline and you are making good use of your most effective teachers to provide support for others, including those teachers who are newer to the profession.
- Since your appointment, you have shaped a new team of leaders who have already demonstrated their ability to improve pupils' outcomes. You have made certain that leaders have the skills they need, by working alongside them to evaluate the quality of teaching and by facilitating their access to leadership training through the local authority. The leader for English has improved the teaching of reading. A new curriculum for reading has been established across the school. Pupils are now reading more frequently and accessing a broader range of reading material. Standards in reading have risen across the school. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age at the end of Year 6 in 2017 rose dramatically and more pupils left the school ready for their secondary school education.
- Leaders recognised that the teaching of phonics was not supporting pupils to make strong enough progress. You reviewed your system for grouping pupils so that teaching could be targeted more precisely to meet pupils' needs. Pupils are now making stronger progress. Those pupils who were slower to reach the expected standard for their age in Year 1 have been well supported so that, by the end of key stage 1 in 2017, almost all caught up to the standard required in the national phonics assessment.
- The effectiveness of your work to develop the quality of teaching is particularly evident in the improvements to pupils' writing. A new handwriting scheme has refined the presentation of pupils' work. Teachers have more confidence and better subject

knowledge in relation to the development of grammar and punctuation. Pupils have greater opportunities to write at length and in a range of subjects. More pupils are now reaching the nationally expected standard for their age by the end of Year 6. However, you recognise that not enough pupils reach the expected standards in spelling by the time they leave the school, and this is a focus of your work this year.

- Leaders have deployed additional funding appropriately to improve outcomes for key groups of pupils. For example, children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the early years are receiving the support they need to help them to access the curriculum alongside their peers. A 'champion' for disadvantaged pupils is keeping a close check on their performance, working with teaching and support staff to make sure that pupils receive the right support if they underachieve. Leaders, including governors, know exactly how additional funding is spent. However, they acknowledge that they have not reviewed which aspects of spending are most successful in improving outcomes for pupils. This limits their ability to plan, strategically, to improve the school's performance. A governor has recently attended training provided by the local authority and is clear about how this aspect of the governing body's work needs to improve.
- Leaders are working hard to provide more opportunities for parents to get involved in the life of the school. In the early years particularly, families appreciate the 'stay and play' sessions and the new home-school app which gives them more information about their children's achievements. Leaders have also conducted their own surveys so that they have a better understanding of the views of parents. They recognise that there are a few parents who do not feel that they can approach the school with their concerns and remain committed to exploring ways to engage with all families within the school community.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching challenges pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, at just the right level so that more reach the highest standards of attainment
- pupils are supported to develop accurate spelling skills
- they review, strategically, the impact of their actions and use this information to set precise priorities and targets for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the senior leadership team. I also met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I discussed the school's journey of improvement with a representative of the local authority and conducted a telephone discussion with a diocesan representative. A group of staff shared their views with me on the support and professional development they have received to improve their teaching. I visited all classrooms and observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I spoke to pupils during their lessons and also met with a group of pupils from Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. I reviewed pupils' work in a range of subjects in a sample of their workbooks. You presented: information detailing pupils' progress and attainment, the school self-evaluation document, the school development plan and your arrangements for checking the performance of teachers. Documents relating to your work to safeguard pupils, including records of incidents, were checked. I reviewed the information and policies on the school's website. I considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), reviewed the results of parental surveys conducted by the school and spoke with parents and carers at the end of the school day.