

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Miss Melanie Haggerty  
Headteacher  
Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School  
Common Edge Road  
Blackpool  
Lancashire  
FY4 5DF

Dear Miss Haggerty

### **Short inspection of Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 November 2012.

#### **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 a family-oriented and caring community where everyone is valued. You are a determined and creative leader. Since the last inspection, you have continued to develop your vision for pupils to be happy and develop a love of learning. Your vision is shared by leaders, staff and governors. You have maintained a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and developing the curriculum to enrich pupils' experiences.

The school's Catholic ethos and motto, 'caring, learning and respect', underpin all that the school does. These strong values contribute to the positive attitudes of pupils and staff and enable pupils to shine. Staff say that they are well supported to develop their skills further. You and your recently appointed deputy headteacher are a strong and cohesive team.

You know the strengths of the school and have a clear understanding of what needs to improve further. You carefully track pupils' progress and ensure that pupils of all abilities are supported effectively. As a result, you have improved outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Children get off to a good start in early years. Pupils love mathematics and this is reflected in the strong progress score in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. You have developed positive links with local secondary schools, which help to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education.

Your pupils are great ambassadors for their school. They are courteous and polite and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils behave well around the school and socialise well during breaktime and lunchtime. They show very positive attitudes to learning in lessons. Pupils say that they feel safe. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said, 'Teachers are kind. They help us to get through our work and get even better and learn more.'

All the parents I spoke with were very positive about the school. As one parent commented, 'Teachers are really supportive and communication is excellent.' Another commented, 'My children have progressed positively. Teachers are very professional.' The great majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents.

Governors are committed and want the best for pupils. One commented, 'We want children to be caring, confident learners and have a chance to do well.' Governors hold you to account effectively. They have an accurate picture of how well pupils are doing because they visit classrooms alongside leaders and ask probing questions. You and your governors receive useful advice, challenge and support from a school improvement educational adviser.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers are given opportunities to observe each other teach and share good practice across the school. You were asked to ensure that pupils made faster progress in writing in key stage 2. The steps you have taken to improve writing are having a positive effect. Pupils are fully engaged in purposeful writing activities that are often linked to reading and drama activities. You were also asked to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils, especially in writing. In response to this, you have raised expectations and have helped staff to improve their questioning skills. Teachers are making effective use of the 'chilli challenge' approach, with different levels of challenge in each activity. This has supported the most able pupils in setting their own goals. However, you are aware that more still needs to be done to improve writing and to continue to improve the level of challenge for the most able pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders ensure that the culture of safeguarding is strong. Leaders make appropriate checks on staff when they are recruited to the school to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Leaders follow up induction with regular training and safeguarding briefings. Governors are also well trained, and regular meetings ensure that they are kept up to date. Staff are vigilant and they confidently use the school's systems to report concerns. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and their families are well supported.

Pupils understand the danger of using the internet because they are taught about this in school. They say that bullying is rare and that they trust staff to deal with

any bullying or other problems that might arise. Parents I spoke with, including those who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, felt that their children are safe and well cared for.

## **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to attendance. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown by their attendance, which is above the national average. However, absence for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities was higher than the national average in 2016. You have instigated a range of activities to address this issue. For example, leaders provide a range of rewards for pupils and work closely with families, engaging the support of the attendance officer. Consequently, attendance rates for these pupils are now above the national average.
- Since the last inspection, you have implemented a number of strategies that are leading to better progress in writing for pupils. You have worked with a local cluster of schools to ensure that the assessment of pupils' writing skills is accurate. The standard of spelling and punctuation has improved. You have broadened the scope of pupils' writing with more opportunities for extended writing. Your educational partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the University of Warwick has helped to develop pupils' self-confidence and enrich their language skills. Pupils also have opportunities to practise their writing skills in a wide range of subjects and develop their technical vocabulary. A review of the school's assessment information and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that progress in writing is improving. However, you are aware that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils' writing continues to improve. You also recognise that some of the most able pupils are not working at greater depth. This is because they are not sufficiently challenged.
- Achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check dipped in 2017 but previously was above the national average. You have changed the pupil groupings so that teaching can be better matched to pupils' needs. Teachers model pronunciation well and pick up errors quickly. In the early years provision and Year 1, pupils develop their ability to hear, say and blend sounds accurately. This is having a positive impact on the progress pupils make. You are aware that you need to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils reach the standard expected by the end of Year 1.
- You have designed a curriculum that engages the interests of pupils. Pupils value the opportunities they have to take part in a range of sports, trips and residential visits. A significant number of pupils play a musical instrument and the school choir participates in the Blackpool Christmas Festival. Older pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example through being peer mediators and anti-bullying ambassadors and answering calls in the school office during lunchtimes.
- Pupils' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development is a strength of the school. Pupils learn about other cultures and faiths. The principles of British values are promoted effectively in lessons and across the wider curriculum. Pupils

know right from wrong and support each other well in class and around the school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a higher proportion of pupils meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- there is a continued focus on sustaining improvement to pupils' achievement in writing
- they provide greater challenge for the most able pupils to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, a group of middle leaders and members of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with your school improvement adviser. I met with pupils from key stage 2 and spoke informally with others during the inspection. I visited classes where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils read. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. As part of the inspection, I took account of 24 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 13 free-text responses. I also considered the views of four staff through Ofsted's online questionnaire. No responses were received to the online questionnaire for pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. Records on keeping pupils safe were evaluated. I undertook a review of the school's website.