

26 January 2018

Mrs Barbara Coulton
Headteacher
St Catherine's RC Primary School
Moss Lane
Leyland
Lancashire
PR25 4SJ

Dear Mrs Coulton

Short inspection of St Catherine's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 January 2018, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

With the support of an able senior leadership team, you provide strong leadership and a very clear sense of direction for the school. You led the school out of special measures four years ago and, since then, you have continued to ensure that staff and pupils strive to do their very best. You have articulated a number of key principles that underpin the teaching and learning in your school. These principles include an absolute belief that every child can achieve, as well as an unrelenting focus on children's successes rather than their failures. You have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and clear plans for addressing weaknesses. For example, raising the achievement of boys in English is rightly a priority in your current school improvement plan.

You have high levels of support from parents and carers. Virtually all the parents who completed the online survey said that the school is well led and managed and that they would recommend it to others. Typical comments from parents complimented your firm and fair leadership, the family atmosphere in the school, the support that staff provide and the way that children thrive at St Catherine's.

The pupils are very well behaved in lessons and around the school. They relate well to adults and to visitors and talk enthusiastically about their work. They take great care of each other. They attend school regularly and on time. They enjoy learning, concentrate well, are articulate and are rightly proud of their many achievements in

and outside the classroom.

The governors challenge and support you appropriately. Through regular visits to the school, by sharing reports on their findings and through a careful examination of detailed reports from you, they have a detailed knowledge of the school. They ensure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and to develop physical education (PE) and sport is used effectively. They agreed that it would be helpful to identify specific targets which they can use to gain a more precise understanding of the impact of the PE and sport funding.

The last inspection report asked you to: use assessment information to set tasks that will enable pupils to make swift progress; enable pupils to use technology to conduct independent research; and to develop the role of subject leaders. You have addressed each of these areas successfully.

Following the last inspection, you have conducted an ongoing, critical analysis of the effectiveness of your assessment processes. Through experimentation, discussion and adaptation, you have developed an online system for tracking pupils' progress in all subjects of the national curriculum. All teachers and teaching assistants have been trained to use this. Together, they conduct regular checks on every pupil's progress. They identify which pupils need additional support and which need further challenges to extend their learning. An important guiding principle of your approach is that no ceiling should be put on any pupil's attainment and progress. As a result, progress is now consistently strong. In 2017, progress in reading was in the top 20% of schools nationally. Progress in writing and mathematics was in the top 10% of schools across the country. Your analysis of the performance of pupils currently at the school shows that this very good progress continues.

Since the last inspection, you have invested in a range of new information and communication technology (ICT). This includes portable tablets that the pupils can use flexibly for independent research in classrooms. During our observations, we saw pupils working enthusiastically on choosing and inputting pictures to illustrate a story. They were making clear gains in knowledge and skills because they had been taught the relevant technological skills needed for the task. Through the newly developed ICT portfolio, you and your staff are able to keep regular checks on pupils' attainment and progress in technology. The most able pupils are receiving additional support from a technology expert on your governing body. The successful impact of this support is reflected in the national awards that pupils have gained, for example for their work in design.

You have put considerable effort, since the last inspection, into developing the role of middle leaders. The school now has a leader for each subject. You base the planning for subjects other than English and mathematics on the local authority's curriculum scheme. You are adapting this appropriately, to suit your pupils' specific needs and the staff's developing confidence in teaching particular subjects. All subject leaders have led training for other staff. Your development plan shows that they are now checking on the progress of pupils in every subject area. Your curriculum is broad and balanced and you provide pupils with a range of

opportunities which they seize with enthusiasm. You place appropriate emphasis on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. Discussions with pupils from key stage 2 showed that they study the major religions of the world. However, these pupils had only visited Christian places of worship.

Safeguarding is effective.

All the 14 parents who spoke to me and every one of the 88 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their children are safe at the school. The eight pupils who met with me said that they feel safe at school and also on the way to and from home. They said that there is some bullying at the school but this is dealt with quickly and effectively. They were adamant that there is no racist bullying at St Catherine's. Your records confirm this. The pupils told me that they can speak to teachers, older pupils or school counsellors if they have any concerns. They can also use the 'worry box' to let others know about anything that is making them unhappy. They are confident that they will receive the help that they need. They were very complimentary about the programme that the school runs to give them age-appropriate advice on how to keep safe from all forms of abuse. Through swimming lessons, they learn how to keep themselves safe in and near water. They also know about road safety and what to do in the case of a fire. However, they are not taught how to keep themselves safe near railway lines.

The governors and staff have all attended up-to-date safeguarding training. The staff I spoke to knew what the possible signs of abuse are and what they should do if they have any concerns about a child's welfare. You work very effectively with external agencies to provide support for children and families who need extra help.

The site is secure and entry to the building is strictly controlled. You have appropriate systems for checking on the suitability of adults in the school to work with children.

Inspection findings

- Early years results rose every year from 2014 to 2016. In 2016, they were above average for reading, writing and mathematics, and also for the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development. I wanted to know whether this good performance continues. You were able to show me that, in 2017, results were once again above average. Your checks for pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 show that early years children continue to perform well.
- Phonics results have been above average since 2014. In 2017, 90% of pupils reached the expected level. I was interested to know whether this high level of performance is being maintained by pupils currently in Year 1. You were able to provide convincing evidence that this is the case.
- At key stage 1, overall results have been average or better since the last inspection. In 2016, they were well below average for middle- and higher-ability pupils in writing and for middle-ability pupils in mathematics. In 2017, results improved to above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Again, I wanted to know whether these improvements are continuing. I found clear evidence of

this.

- Key stage 2 results have been generally above average since the last inspection. In 2016, reading results were not as good. The proportions of middle-ability pupils gaining the expected level, and of higher-ability pupils gaining the higher levels of performance, were significantly below national averages. However, in 2017, the reading results for these groups of pupils returned to above average. In 2017, progress for key stage 2 pupils was in the highest 10% of schools nationally. Your analysis of the performance of pupils currently in key stage 2 shows that they continue to do well. This was borne out by the work we saw in books and in lessons.
- Leaders have rightly identified the need to improve the performance of boys in English across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in addition to churches, pupils visit a wide range of places of worship, in order to extend their understanding of a range of faiths and of life in modern Britain
- pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe near railways
- plans for the use of the PE and sport funding include specific targets which can be used to assess the precise impact of the actions taken.

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

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held a meeting with you and the senior leadership team to discuss your self-evaluation. I met five governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also spoke to representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese. You and I visited lessons to observe teaching and look at books. I discussed behaviour and attendance with you and the business manager. You and the family worker gave me information on safeguarding. I met a group of eight pupils, chosen at random from Years 3 to 6. I spoke to 14 parents as they brought their children to school and examined the 88 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I examined a range of documentation, including your self-evaluation, school development plan and your most recent report to governors. I also listened to

pupils from Years 2 and 6 reading to me.