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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Sarah Price
Headteacher
St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School
Thames Avenue
Burnley
Lancashire
BB10 2PZ

Dear Mrs Price

Short inspection of St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 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. You, alongside your deputy headteacher, have created a school where pupils can shine. 'With Christ by our side, we do our best in all things' is your mantra. Pupils embrace the opportunities you provide for them. These include having the responsibility to be a 'lead chaplain', a 'mini-vinnie' and a Year 6 'buddy'. Pupils and staff are able to thrive in a welcoming and supportive Christian community. Pupils with whom I spoke describe their school as a 'friendly' place to be.

Leaders and staff are enthusiastic and committed. The high-quality pastoral support that they provide for pupils is a strength of the school. This means that parents and carers are confident that their children are well cared for. Since your appointment, governors have provided you with support and challenge in equal measure. They are committed to securing the best outcomes for pupils and they do so by asking pertinent questions of leaders. Governors maintain active roles within the school community. This means that they make a positive and whole-hearted contribution to the academic and spiritual development of pupils.

You have a precise, accurate and detailed view of the school. You do not shy away from tackling aspects of the school that require further development. You set about these with tenacity and determination. Since the previous inspection, you have worked to improve the use of teaching assistants in the classroom. You have changed the way in which teaching assistants are working with groups of pupils. This allows you to capitalise on teaching assistants' individual strengths. You have

improved communication between teachers and teaching assistants through effective staff training. Their conversations focus upon improving the progress made by pupils. This ensures that teaching assistants are clear about their role in the classroom. Our observations showed that teaching assistants use effective questions and re-shape their explanations to pupils. As a result, they are now supporting pupils more effectively and so pupils are making better progress.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to improve the level of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. This is something you and your leadership team have addressed. You have made changes to the way you check on teaching. Your systems have more rigour and you focus on how successfully teachers are challenging pupils. As a result, pupils are making better progress. This is particularly evident in pupils' writing. For example, in Year 2, teachers challenge pupils to develop their writing further using adverbs. Pupils go on to do so with success. The most able pupils are making better progress in their reading, writing and in mathematics. Nonetheless, you acknowledge that teachers need to raise further their expectations of what all pupils are capable of, particularly in mathematics at key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have made safeguarding everyone's number one priority. In doing so, you have created a vigilant community. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors are meticulous in ensuring that the system is robust to check that adults are suitable to work with children. Staff and governors receive regular training on safeguarding. This training is up to date. All staff are quick to spot signs of potential concern and then follow safeguarding procedures.

Pupils feel confident that they are able to talk to an adult in school if they are worried about anything. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including online. Although bullying is rare, pupils are certain that staff will deal with any incidents of bullying effectively. Your records of work with external agencies are detailed and well ordered. You liaise well with these agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the guidance and support they need.

Inspection findings

- A key focus of the inspection was to investigate how you have addressed the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and the attendance of those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This is because in the past, the attendance of these pupils was below the national average.
- Your systems to ensure that pupils and children attend school are now strong. You monitor pupils' attendance closely. You put in place help and support for families who struggle to get their children to school. For example, you support

families to get help from external agencies when they need it. As a result, pupils are rarely absent from school. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving.

- Another focus of the inspection was the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. You acknowledge that in the past, disadvantaged pupils have made less progress than other pupils in the school.
- You have worked hard to ensure that teachers and teaching assistants are aware of pupils' needs. Teachers know pupils and their families well. Your assessment system allows teachers to monitor carefully the progress of all pupils, including that of disadvantaged pupils. If pupils are not making the progress they should, staff provide them with appropriate help and support. This allows pupils to catch up.
- Teachers have the same expectations of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. The supportive relationships between staff and pupils in school mean that pupils are able to get help if they are finding their work difficult. Teachers support and encourage pupils to attempt more demanding activities. However, because teachers' expectations are not always as high as they might be, occasionally pupils complete too many examples before they are challenged with more complex tasks.
- You have put a number of strategies in place to help all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who are at risk of falling behind. For example, you have introduced 'the beehive', an area in school where pupils can access carefully tailored programmes of support. Strong links between staff ensure that pupils in 'the beehive' make good progress. The provision of a number of workshops for parents and carers is allowing more parents to support their children with their learning at home.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving but still has some way to go to match that of other pupils. Leaders need to evaluate more carefully which teaching and learning strategies are most effective. This will allow them to refine their approach in using additional funding, focusing more on what works best and thus ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make even better progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers raise further their expectations of what all pupils are capable of, particularly in mathematics at key stage 2
- leaders review and refine their approach to their spending of pupil premium funding to ensure that it is spent on those strategies which are the most effective.

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

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, a group of teachers and some members of the governing body. I also met with parents at the beginning of the school day and met formally with a group of pupils. I met with the school improvement partner. Leaders accompanied me on visits to classes, where I observed teaching and learning across subjects. I looked at work produced by pupils in mathematics and writing. I listened to some key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils read. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and the school's improvement plan. I also looked at the school's website. I considered 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 18 responses to Ofsted's free-text facility.