

28 February 2018

Mr Barry Broderick
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
Brooke Street
Chorley
Lancashire
PR6 0LB

Dear Mr Broderick

Short inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Chorley

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are supported very well by your deputy headteacher and together you are an effective team. Your high expectations are shared by staff and governors. You have created an enthusiastic team which is passionate about teaching and learning.

You and your staff have worked effectively to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders, including the governing body, accurately set the priorities for improvements. You have successfully implemented changes to the way mathematics is taught. Learning activities accurately meet the needs of pupils and provide appropriate challenge and opportunities to develop independent thinking. As a result, in 2017 a high proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 1. An increasing proportion of pupils also reached the national average in mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

The development of the outdoor area in the early years has greatly enhanced the learning opportunities for children. The proportion of children who reached a good level of development in 2017 was above the national average.

You and your staff have identified, however, that there is still more to do to increase the proportions of pupils that reach the expected standard by the end of key stage 2 in reading and writing. Assessment information for pupils currently in school shows that your actions are beginning to bring about improvements.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. You have established a culture of professional dialogue, support and challenge among your staff. They appreciate the opportunities that they have to share skills and knowledge with each other, and with colleagues in other schools. This is particularly helpful to staff who are new to teaching. Teachers now plan more carefully for pupils' learning and progress. Pupils understand clearly the next steps in their learning in order to improve the quality and accuracy of their work. They are proud of their achievements and this is reflected in the quality of the work seen during the inspection. Pupils' positive attitudes towards learning contribute effectively to the strong progress that they make. You have identified, however, that in some classes teachers are not doing enough to close gaps in pupils' learning to enable them to make more rapid progress, and reach higher standards, particularly in reading.

Pupils are polite and talk confidently about their learning. The older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously and act as role models for the younger pupils. These pupils enjoy their roles as sports leaders and as members of committees. They enjoy the opportunities to participate in a wide range of sporting activities. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the way in which teachers make learning fun and interesting, especially the reading and mathematical challenges teachers set for them. They are particularly animated about the work that they are doing on how to keep themselves safe. One pupil commented, 'We know who to talk to to sort out problems and get rid of any 'yucky' feelings we might have.' Pupils are proud of their school and feel cared for and valued.

The overwhelming majority of parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who accessed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, spoke very positively about the school and your leadership in particular. They enjoy the opportunity to be part of celebrations and to attend sessions in school, which allow them to join in with their children's learning. Many parents spoke highly of the care, guidance and support that they have received from you and your staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership of the school has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, including online filtering arrangements, are fit for purpose. Governors carry out their statutory duties with due diligence. Staff and governors receive regular training and know what to do if they have any concerns. An effective and efficient system ensures that the most vulnerable pupils are identified quickly and receive the help that they need.

Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly online. They feel that school is a safe place to be. Pupils also said bullying is rare and behaviour is good. They are confident that any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with swiftly.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we looked at several lines of enquiry. The first was about attendance. Staff robustly follow up when pupils are absent. Pupils understand

the importance of attending school regularly. As a result, the overall attendance rate is above the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. This is beginning to have an impact on improving progress rates for pupils.

- You have been relentless in your drive to improve the attendance of a number of pupils who are regularly absent from school, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Attendance is improving for this group of pupils. You know your families extremely well and work closely with other agencies to provide the support that parents need so that they can support their children and the progress that they make.
- We also discussed how effectively the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has been used. Leaders have identified the key barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Staff work with colleagues in other schools to share their knowledge, skills and resources. Highly trained staff provide effective nurture and guidance for the most vulnerable pupils. This enhances their attitudes to learning and has a positive impact on the improving progress that they make.
- You have ensured that staff have the skills and resources that they need to help disadvantaged pupils catch up quickly, particularly in key stage 1. Activities closely match the needs of these pupils and, as a result, their progress is improving. The school's own assessment information indicates that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving over time, especially in reading and mathematics. However, you acknowledge that too few disadvantaged pupils reach the level expected for their age by the end of key stage 2, particularly in writing.
- We also looked at the actions that have been taken by leaders to improve outcomes for children at the end of Reception. The small proportion of the children that attend the school's Nursery quickly develop skills and knowledge typical for their age. However, the majority of children start school with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. You have successfully improved links with the variety of settings that the majority of children attend before starting school. Parents commented that their children settle quickly into the routines of school as a result of the well-thought-through activities and events that they attend in the summer term.
- Leaders work with professionals to swiftly identify what the 'next steps' in children's learning in the early years should be. Leaders have ensured that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding that they need to support the good progress that children make. You work closely with colleagues in other schools to share expertise, and to ensure that your assessments are accurate. As a result of your actions, in 2017 the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was above the national average. Monthly sessions for parents to 'stay and play' provide them with the opportunity to understand what their children are learning. Workshops in how you teach reading, phonics and mathematics enable parents to develop the skills that they need to support their children's learning at home. The majority of parents contribute regularly to the evidence that you collect about what their children have learned. Parents spoke highly of how well your staff know their children, and how happy they are to come to school each day.

- Finally, we looked at the actions you have taken to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils reach the expected standard for their age by the end of key stage 2. In 2017, a higher proportion of pupils reached the standard expected nationally in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling at the end of key stage 2. Despite the proportion of pupils working at a greater depth in reading and writing being above average in 2017, too few pupils reached the expected standard in these subjects.
- Teachers in key stage 2 use assessment information from a range of activities to identify the gaps in pupils' learning. Learning activities accurately match the needs and interests of the pupils. For example, pupils enjoy the opportunity to challenge their own thinking in mathematics. A pupil who spoke to me said, 'I really like doing the triangulation family number facts because I get to use everything I know about calculations.' Older pupils spoke very eloquently about the project that they were working on linked to the class novel 'How to train your dragon' by Cressida Cowell. They were writing a descriptive piece to be the voice-over to a short film they had already produced.
- The school's assessment information shows that these actions are increasing the number of pupils in key stage 2, including the disadvantaged, now working at age-related expectations, particularly in mathematics and reading. However, you have identified that, in some classes, measures to close the gaps in pupils' learning are not swift enough, particularly in writing. Assessment information shows that once gaps in pupils' learning have been identified, and help is given, pupils make the accelerated progress that they need to catch up quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they take action swiftly to close gaps in pupils' learning in writing, particularly those who are disadvantaged, so that a higher proportion of pupils reach the standard expected for their age by the end of key stage 2
- they build on the progress pupils make in reading, so that a higher proportion reach the expected standard by the end of key stage 2.

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

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I met with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. I also met with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the archdiocese. I conducted a learning walk with you and we visited classes, where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I met with a group of pupils during the day, formally, and I spoke with a number of parents in the playground at the start of the school day. I also took account of the free-text comments and the 43 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised pupils' assessment information, the school's self-evaluation document and your school improvement plan. I also scrutinised the single central record, and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection procedures and practices.