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Mrs Clare Campbell
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Dear Mrs Campbell

Short inspection of St Charles' RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

This welcoming school serves a wide parish and local community. The behaviour of the pupils, both in lessons and around the school, continues to be a strength. Pupils that I spoke to were keen to share their love of learning. They spoke articulately about their favourite subjects and their enjoyment of being able to work in groups with other pupils. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their recent fundraising efforts for local and international charities. You involve the pupils in the life of the school. For example, they were heavily involved in the design process for the forest school area. Sometimes you involve pupils in monitoring activities.

Parents and carers are complimentary about the school. The views gathered through the parent surveys and from those parents that I spoke to were overwhelmingly positive. One parent, with a view typical of many, stated:

I cannot praise the school enough. They create happy, well-rounded children. They are very welcoming to parents; they listen and they are really friendly and caring. The teachers build confidence in the children from day one.

This view echoed your own views when you said, 'Self-esteem is the key to learning'.

You make learning fun at this school. Pupils are entitled to a wide and exciting curriculum that not only prepares them for life in modern Britain but for life in the wider world. Pupils learn about a wide range of other cultures. They have opportunities to meet and talk to people from around the world. Recently, you have hosted visitors from China, Canada, Malaysia and Holland. Art and dance are strengths of the curriculum. For example, in Year 2, pupils use a range of techniques to produce artwork in the style of Lowry. A large group of gifted dancers will soon perform at the Imperial War Museum North. You have close working links with a number of museums, universities and arts organisations to make the curriculum come alive. The school operates an art therapy unit that you open to a range of other schools. In this way, you ensure that pupils with social, emotional and health needs have the opportunity to express themselves without using words. You ensure that each class has regular sessions in the forest school area, as you want pupils to benefit from a wide range of practical life and outdoor-learning experiences.

Governors understand the strengths of the school. Equally, they are accurate in their understanding of what needs to improve further. Governors are enthusiastically involved in the life of the school. They help in lessons, engage in monitoring activities and run the school football team. They are supportive of the school leaders; they challenge and support you in equal measure. They are aware of their statutory responsibilities and carry these out diligently.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of your action planning. Having scrutinised a wide range of planning documentation, I was satisfied that you are accurate in your identified priorities for this year. Action planning focuses on key aspects to improve outcomes and pupils' well-being. You review your action plans at regular intervals. All information is shared with the governing body.

Teaching has improved. Pupils' books, from a range subjects were of a high standard. A high proportion of children typically achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception Year. You have sustained results in the phonics screening check that have been in line with or above the national average for a number of years. End of key stage 1 test results have been above national expectations, with high proportions of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of key stage 2, the majority of pupils achieve the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated lead for safeguarding, you have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. Careful checks have been made on the suitability of adults to work in the school. All staff have received 'Prevent' and safeguarding basic awareness training. Several staff and governors are trained in safer recruitment.

You work with a range of outside agencies, including children's social care and the education welfare officer. You make timely referrals, ensuring that children are safe and that attendance remains high. Parents who responded to the Ofsted surveys felt that their children were well cared for and that they were safe at school. Members of staff are present at the school gates at the start and end of the school day. Access to the site is limited and signing-in procedures are robust.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on three lines of enquiry. First, I wanted to investigate how well leaders make checks on the quality of teaching. You work closely with other schools locally. Together, leaders and teachers work collaboratively to engage in monitoring and challenge activities. For example, you monitor the quality of writing in English and across the curriculum with other schools. Through monitoring activities, you develop coaching roles. Less experienced members of staff are paired with more experienced staff to share best practice. All senior leaders have received coaching training. Together, we looked at the records of your monitoring activities. I examined the accuracy of your observations and how these related to pupils' progress. Regular monitoring and pupil progress meetings ensure that you carefully track all groups, ensuring that they make at least expected progress.
- The next area that I looked at related to the number of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. The number of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics has been lower than the number of pupils who achieved the higher standards at the end of key stage 1. From observing in lessons, looking at pupils' books and talking to pupils, it is evident that they are challenged across the curriculum. For example, we observed teachers skilfully posing questions to tease out extra information in a range of mathematics lessons across key stage 2. We saw activities that were carefully matched to the ability of the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to extend their answers and explain through detailed reasoning. Through the analysis of past mathematical test papers, your monitoring indicated that problem-solving was an issue. This year, you have embedded a daily problem-solving activity in all year groups. As a result, progress in mathematics is improving, with increased numbers working towards the higher standards.
- In English, we saw evidence of writing skills being applied across the curriculum. We looked at evidence of writing in English, topic and science books. Pupils write purposefully. For example, we observed Year 4 pupils working on report-writing skills. This work would ultimately lead into a science, technology, engineering and mathematics project. You make writing fun and challenging through practical experiences. Pupils in Year 5 wrote about how a cocoa bean becomes a chocolate bar. This writing project finished with a visit from a chocolatier. Handwriting and presentation is a consistent strength across the school.
- Pupils have opportunities to read widely across the curriculum. All pupils have a reading book and a library book. The pupils I heard read talked about their choice of books. Pupils' books were matched well to their ability with effective challenge. You promote reading well across the school; pupils have access to a

wide range of high-quality texts. Regular visits from authors and poets are commonplace, ensuring that pupils remain motivated and inspired.

- There is a strong culture for learning in this school. You encourage pupils not to be afraid to make mistakes or to take risks. The progress of pupils in the school currently shows an improved picture. Increased numbers of pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are making good progress, with a higher proportion now working towards the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics across all year groups. We agreed that this progress should be reflected in published data to show an improvement in progress by the end of key stage 2.
- The final area that I looked at during this inspection focused on the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You identify pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities early. You have close relationships with a number of nurseries in the area. You explained to me that, over time, pupils' needs have changed from mainly speech and language to social and emotional needs. You told me that a large number of children have been witness to traumatic events in their past. You work with a wide range of agencies, ensuring that your staff are well qualified to support pupils. One way that you have tackled these growing needs has been by providing art therapy sessions. This service is not only open to pupils in your own school but you invite a wide range of local schools to send pupils.
- You carefully track the progress of each individual pupil through pupil progress meetings. School progress data indicates that most pupils identified as having SEN and/or disabilities make good or better progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. You use your teaching assistants and teaching staff well to run a number of interventions across the school. However, we agreed that you could do more to ensure that you have a better overview of the impact of these interventions over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater number of pupils achieve the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2
- they improve the systems used to monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions.

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 Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

With you, I carried out visits to a number of classes across the school. I looked at pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their learning. I heard pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 read. I examined a wide range of school documentation, including the school development plan and the school' self-evaluation. I scrutinised a wide range of assessment information and information in relation to monitoring activities in the school. I looked at the school's single central record and checked records of safeguarding and staff recruitment. I had a meeting with a representative of the local authority. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I spoke to a number of parents before school. I considered 22 responses to the pupil survey and 5 responses to the staff survey. I considered 33 free-text responses and 54 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I received one letter from a parent.