

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



14 March 2018

Mrs K Monaghan
Headteacher
St Jerome's Catholic Primary School
Greenloons Drive
Formby
Liverpool
Merseyside
L37 2LX

Dear Mrs Monaghan

Short inspection of St Jerome's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you have established a committed leadership team full of energy and drive. There is a friendly atmosphere; staff work together to provide the best possible opportunities for pupils. Christian values are at the heart of the school's culture, and pupils regularly engage in reflection on the world around them.

Governors are effective in monitoring and evaluating the impact of leaders' actions and demonstrate strong strategic leadership. They make good use of their professional skills, including their experience in safeguarding, education and financial management, to ask challenging questions and provide you with valuable support.

Pupils are given a broad range of experiences that are carefully linked to developing personal and academic success. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning and they enjoy their time at school. You told me that that you want St Jerome's to be a place where children 'want to be'. All pupils who spoke to me were extremely positive about their school. They talked about their learning with enthusiasm. They spoke highly of their teachers and valued the help that they give them. One comment included: 'Staff work hard to do nice things to encourage us to like ourselves and be the best we can be. It develops our confidence.' They take their responsibilities as peer monitors very seriously. They are proud of their involvement in fundraising activities, especially those that demonstrate the positive sense of community in the school.

The vast majority of parents and carers who spoke to me at the start of the day, and who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were very positive. One comment summed up the school's approach to the education of pupils: 'They are given a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and personal development. Our children have always been happy and look forward to school. We couldn't have wished for a more productive and caring learning environment for our children to flourish.'

You have effectively resolved the areas for improvement that inspectors identified at the previous inspection. Teachers now use questioning effectively to check what pupils know, and then move their learning forwards. The standard of work in pupils' books, across a wide range of subjects, confirms that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teaching assistants are helping to ensure that pupils' progress across the curriculum is good. They support and challenge pupils effectively. All staff have strong questioning skills, which enable pupils to think profoundly about their learning. Teachers plan activities to meet the range of abilities of pupils and adapt work in lessons as needed. As a result, pupils' outcomes continue to improve. The senior leadership team and subject leaders closely monitor the progress in subjects. However, leaders are aware that they should use the information gained from recent improvements in the assessment of their subject areas to enhance their contribution to whole school planning and development.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding policy and procedures meet requirements. You have made sure that systems for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are suitable. Up-to-date training has been delivered so that roles and responsibilities are understood by all, including governors. You ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media.

You also ensure that pupils are increasingly aware of their own responsibility for safety. Pupils are trained in 'Heartstart' emergency life-saving skills as part of their commitment to keeping themselves and others safe. Work has also been completed on water safety because of the heightened risk in the locality.

The majority of parents reported that pupils are safe. Pupils told me they feel very safe and well cared for in school. They feel very confident that adults will help them if needed. School assemblies are used to provide information so that pupils know how to stay safe.

Inspection findings

- We agreed several areas of enquiry for this inspection. The first of these was the actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes in phonics. Teachers plan effectively for pupils' progress in phonics. Letters and sounds are taught consistently across Reception and Year 1. Observations and written work seen during the inspection showed that the pupils are using and applying their phonic skills effectively. There is a range of strategies in place to develop phonological awareness, including the revision of taught sounds, identifying the sounds in spoken words before spelling and the use

of reading books that match the sounds pupils can read. Pupils' achievement in phonics is good, and by the end of Year 1 the majority of pupils pass the phonics screening check. Those who do not are given the help that they need so that they catch up quickly.

- The next area we looked at was how you are improving outcomes for the most able at key stage 1, especially in reading. You have revised the curriculum, raised the expectations of your staff and been successful in enabling pupils to be more aspirational. You provide staff with a range of training and opportunities to share expertise. Tasks are precisely matched to pupils' needs. As a result, the school's own information shows that progress for these pupils is accelerating.
- In key stage 1, the teaching of reading is also strong. Recent improvements in the teaching of inference and deduction, coupled with improvement in staff's subject knowledge, have had a significant impact on pupils' progress. Texts are chosen to engage and challenge pupils, especially the most able. As a result, the most able pupils are currently making accelerated progress.
- The final area we looked at was how you are ensuring that pupils reach the highest standards in their writing by the end of key stage 2. Teachers effectively use a wide range of resources, such as well-chosen film clips, as a tool to motivate pupils to build vocabulary before they begin their writing. The progress seen in pupils' books shows that opportunities for writing in topic work are motivating all pupils. This was especially evident in Year 2 when pupils were writing about the voyage of Christopher Columbus and were able to develop geographical and historical skills while further improving their writing.
- The curriculum is engaging for pupils, with a range of opportunities to develop writing. For example, the writing of letters about pollution on local beaches has resulted in one pupil's letter being published in the local newspaper. You have also made effective use of good-quality reading books to inspire improved writing, especially for key stage 2 boys. As a result, the progress of all pupils in writing is improving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders use the information gained from recent improvements in the assessment of their subject areas to enhance their contribution to whole-school planning and development.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Throughout the inspection, I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I held meetings with you and with senior staff to discuss improvements in areas of responsibility. I also looked at work in pupils' books.

I reviewed documentation, which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered 59 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.

I visited classes along with you to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management.

I looked at safeguarding, evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep children safe, including while they are online. I also scrutinised your recruitment checks and record-keeping.