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Mrs Rich
Headteacher
St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School, Preston
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Dear Mrs Rich

Short inspection of St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School, Preston

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 since the last inspection. Since 2013, children's attainment at the end of Reception has increased year on year and, in 2017, was close to the national average. Pupils' past and present progress across the school has been and is good in English and mathematics. Since 2013, their attainment has increased.

The main area for improvement after the previous inspection was to improve teaching. This formed my first line of enquiry for this inspection. Pupils said that teaching has improved. When I looked at their work and visited lessons with you, it was clear that most teachers make effective use of assessment to re-shape their lessons depending on whether pupils find the work hard or easy. Pupils edit and improve their work. We agreed that the next step is for adults to ask pupils questions that are even more challenging and set tasks that enable a higher proportion of middle-ability pupils to excel. There are clear strengths in English and mathematics.

Most parents, carers and pupils are happy with the school. You and senior leaders have successfully worked on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils said that behaviour in lessons has improved, which means that they can concentrate more on their work. You and your governors have successfully shaped the school's ambitious vision and Catholic ethos, which are reflected in pupils' good manners, politeness and respect for others.

The governing body has showed determination for the school to improve to be as close to outstanding as possible. It has not made sure that it has a system to check if the information on the website meets requirements. I worked with you to make sure that by the end of the inspection everything that should be there is in place.

The school has data held online to show the achievement of different groups of pupils and their attendance, but the system does not allow you to access it quickly or efficiently. As a result, leaders are hindered in being able to quickly get an overview of groups of pupils. You acknowledge that this inefficiency in information technology is an area for attention.

The governors I met did not know in much depth about the impact of the use of the pupil premium funding, the sport premium or about how teaching has improved. The local authority and school leaders have already identified some weaknesses in governance and are taking effective action to tackle them.

Safeguarding is effective.

Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements to safeguarding systems. Parents are no longer allowed in school, or to walk through on the way to Nursery at the start and the end of the day, without signing in. This means that senior leaders have better oversight as to who is entering the school when pupils are on site. The new child protection policy fully meets requirements. The governing body, however, had not made sure that an up-to-date policy was published on the school's website at the start of the inspection.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The school works well with other agencies and shares information readily to make sure that pupils are protected. The relationships that staff have developed with agencies, such as health services, attendance officers and the police, mean that they are better placed to make decisions that will support families and protect pupils from harm. There are good systems in place to train and update staff in developments in safeguarding practice.

Inspection findings

- My second line of enquiry was to find out why very few Year 2 and Year 6 pupils attained high standards in English and mathematics. Also, by the end of Reception, no child exceeded the standard in reading or mathematics in the last three years. Current children are attaining well. Some children can already write in full sentences with correct punctuation and plausible spelling for difficult words such as 'dragon'. In mathematics during the inspection, you and I observed children being able to calculate confidently and accurately within 20 and to count accurately beyond 20. Across the school, there is a higher proportion of pupils attaining well than in recent years. This is reflected in current pupils' mathematics and written work. In a few examples, particularly in history, geography and science, the work that was set did not allow the middle-ability

pupils to develop their learning to attain well. Similarly, in a few examples, adults missed chances to ask middle-ability pupils more challenging questions to attain higher standards.

- The school's published assessment information indicated that, in the last two years, pupils' outcomes in science lagged behind those in English and mathematics, particularly in key stage 1. This formed my next line of enquiry. The science curriculum meets requirements. It has an appropriate focus on investigation, experimentation and making science lively and exciting for pupils, for example through theme days. Pupils, particularly in Year 4, make good links in their science work to what they are also learning in English and mathematics. They develop their scientific knowledge and make good progress. In key stage 1, pupils make good gains in their understanding of how to conduct experiments. Similarly, they make good progress in their knowledge and in their use of technical vocabulary. The more able scientists are hampered slightly because they do not have the opportunity to elaborate their ideas. This is because they are using worksheets which are easily completed and do not allow them to think or to explain their scientific curiosity.
- In 2016/17, there was a greater proportion of pupils absent for a large amount of time than the national average. This formed my fourth line of enquiry. Eighteen pupils were frequently absent in 2016/17 and this figure has now risen to 25 pupils. Overall attendance is around the national average. Some of the absences are affected by parents spending longer on holiday than is authorised by the school, particularly those pupils visiting family in Eastern Europe. In addition, the data is affected by parents taking pupils to live elsewhere but not telling the school, making the absence data appear to be higher than average. The inefficiency of the school's data systems means that data is not readily to hand, which slows up the decision-making and wastes time.
- As the website at the start of the inspection did not contain the required information, my final line of enquiry was to find out if the governing body has a system of checking the website and other statutory requirements. The answer was 'no'. There is no systematic procedure for checking; however, the governing body is meeting in the next week to discuss how to set up a system. The senior leaders and the local authority have already identified that the governing body needs to increase its knowledge of its statutory duties and has organised training. By the end of the inspection, the published information on the website met requirements.
- During the inspection, I noted that the curriculum, particularly in subjects such as art, history, science and geography, lacks breadth and diversity. There is, for example, an over-focus on studying men. There are few, if any, notable women included in subjects other than English. Also, there is little time spent teaching modern foreign languages. Consequently, pupils understand few words or sentences in French, the language taught, including the names of colours, how old they are, and how to say their name.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a review of information technology systems so that leaders can access the data about pupils' attendance and achievement more quickly and efficiently
- adults ask pupils challenging questions and set tasks that enable a higher proportion of middle-ability pupils to attain well
- the governing body has a more detailed and precise understanding of its duties, for example in checking that the website meets requirements
- the curriculum is broadened so that there is greater coverage of women across the different subjects and that pupils' achievement in modern foreign languages improves.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out joint observations with you in four classes. I looked through a sample of pupils' work. I spoke with a group of key stage 2 pupils formally, who I also heard reading, and considered the views of 43 pupils who completed Ofsted's online survey. I considered the views of 15 parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and nine staff who completed Ofsted's survey.

I met with two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I met some teachers and subject leaders, for example physical education. I also met staff responsible for leading safeguarding and the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I looked through a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding.