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Mrs Susan Leck
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Leck

Short inspection of St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Lowton

Following my visit to the school on 21 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. Leaders and governors aim to provide a caring and safe school, where pupils develop confidence and respect for others, and achieve their best. This aim is a tangible part of the school's ethos and is embodied in the priorities for improvement that leaders have identified. Staff are proud to be part of your team. They consider that senior leaders provide strong support for their professional development and do all they can to ensure that they are motivated and respected.

The vast majority of parents I spoke to, and those who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are extremely satisfied with all aspects of the school's work. It is clear that you have addressed the previous inspection's recommendation to improve communication with parents. As part of this process, you have created a school app that gives parents access to school messages and information online as well as when 'on the go' via their smart phones. You also use other online news and social media sites to share information about school events and pupils' learning. As a result, most parents are now happy with communication.

When your school was last inspected, inspectors also asked leaders to improve pupils' progress in mathematics, particularly that of the most able pupils. You have had considerable success in addressing this recommendation. Pupils in both key stages achieve very well in mathematics. In 2017, for example, Year 6 pupils' progress in mathematics was well above average, and their standards were much

higher than those of pupils of this age nationally. All groups of pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, made strong progress in relation to their prior attainment. Teachers have benefited from professional development. This has ensured that they have the secure subject knowledge needed to teach mathematics well and meet your high expectations. Mathematics is a favourite subject of many pupils. They speak enthusiastically about the interesting problem-solving tasks they undertake, such as costing a holiday and using recipes to learn about ratio. In both key stages, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and science is similarly impressive. In all of these subjects, pupils also make strong progress and attain standards that are above, and often well above, national averages. In 2017, for example, 100% of Year 1 children attained the expected standard in phonics. In the same year, Year 2 pupils' attainment in reading was in the highest 10% of schools nationally. Importantly, these are not one-off examples, but consistent features of pupils' achievement. Pupils' workbooks and displays of their work around the school reflect the high expectations you and staff set for their learning and presentation.

Reception children enjoy a wide range of interesting activities indoors and outside. These are successfully planned to develop children's skills in all areas and promote a love of learning. During the inspection, for example, children were thoroughly enjoying making fruit kebabs, while at the same time developing their understanding of important mathematical and scientific ideas. Children's attainment by the end of Reception has increased since the last inspection. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of Reception has been above average for the last three years.

There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. In other subjects, pupils receive a broad range of interesting learning experiences. These are enriched by thoughtfully planned educational visits and many extra-curricular activities that appeal to pupils' interests. Parents appreciate the exciting learning experiences your school provides and consider that these add much to their children's enjoyment of school. You are aware, however, that leaders and governors do not have enough insight into how well pupils are achieving in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Additionally, you recognise that fundamental British values are not developed well enough across the curriculum.

Pupils say that they enjoy school. They talk confidently about their learning in different subjects and of experiences that have made learning memorable. These included a theatre visit linked to their study of the First World War, learning Brazilian dancing and learning about the principles of fair trade. In sharing their views about the best things in the school, pupils were quick to comment on their teachers. Their remarks included: 'teachers are kind', 'teachers don't do lessons in a boring way' and 'teachers comfort you if you are upset'.

Governors know the school's strengths and improvement priorities and they support and challenge you effectively. They ask probing questions about pupils' standards and progress, including those of the most able pupils and those who are vulnerable

or disadvantaged. In this duty and in other aspects of their work, governors are driven by their conviction that 'no child is forgotten'. Governors express a genuine commitment to ensuring that pupils become good citizens. They are correct in their view that the school's curriculum contributes effectively to this. However, not all governors appreciate the school's role and duty to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. This is true specifically of the importance of educating pupils about different types of families and relationships.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors ensure that all of the required checks are made to determine the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. The record of these checks is meticulously maintained. Safeguarding training for staff is regular and up to date. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are vigilant in referring concerns to you or your deputy safeguarding leader. Your records show that staff take concerns seriously and act upon them. Where necessary, you seek professional advice from local authority services to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need. The pupils I spoke to had secure knowledge of how to keep safe when using the internet. You also provide parents with useful information to help them protect their children from the risks of online technology.

You have a system for teachers to record incidents of misbehaviour and to escalate serious incidents to you. For the most part, this works effectively. However, there are inconsistencies in the detail with which teachers record and classify incidents involving misbehaviour and bring these to your attention. This includes allegations of bullying and incidents of prejudice-based name-calling. The result is that your central record of behaviour is not sufficiently comprehensive. It does not allow you to monitor and analyse any patterns in different types of behaviour so that you can respond to these and report fully to governors about behaviour in the school.

There is a very high degree of parental satisfaction with the school's work to ensure good behaviour and pupils' safety, including the school's response to bullying. A small number of parents are, however, dissatisfied with the way the school deals with bullying. The administrative weakness I identified in record-keeping meant that I was unable to check the thoroughness of the school's response to parental concerns on this matter. The pupils I spoke to, and who completed Ofsted's online pupils' survey, said that there is hardly any bullying at the school, but if it happens teachers are good at dealing with it. The commitment to pupils' safety and well-being is evident in the prestigious award the school has received for supporting pupils' mental health. In addition, you are currently working towards achieving the anti-bullying quality mark.

Inspection findings

- You are currently leading a review of the school's curriculum. As part of this, you are considering how best to assess pupils' achievements in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, and how to develop fundamental British

values in the curriculum. Your school development plan shows that much thought has been given to what needs to be done to address these priorities. However, the philosophy and aims of the curriculum for pupils in St Catherine's have not been clarified and agreed as the basis for this work.

- Your school provides a broad curriculum that meets national curriculum requirements. Subject leaders support colleagues and check that the content of the curriculum progressively develops pupils' knowledge and skills. During the inspection, you provided a sample of work to demonstrate progress in geography and design technology. You recognise, however, that more precise information about pupils' standards and progress in the wider curriculum is needed. You are reviewing various assessment models and considering the frequency and scope of the assessments that teachers will make. In this you are rightly mindful of the impact on teachers' workload. However, we discussed whether a benchmark of reaching the expected standards was sufficiently aspirational, given the high standards pupils reach in English, mathematics and science.
- You have begun to audit how well fundamental British values are promoted within your school. The process you are using is effective, but work is at an early stage of development. The potential of different subjects to increase pupils' knowledge of fundamental British values, and related ideas about diversity and equalities, has not yet begun. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is promoted very well across the curriculum. This is also the case in relation to aspects of their moral and social development. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of British values, diversity and equalities is underdeveloped.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a common understanding of the school's curriculum intent
- leaders have a better understanding of pupils' attainment and progress in subjects other than English, mathematics and science
- the curriculum gives pupils a deeper understanding of fundamental British values, diversity and equalities, so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain
- teachers' recording and classification of misbehaviour is consistent, and central records of behaviour are detailed, analysed and show how bullying incidents or allegations have been investigated and resolved.

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

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss leaders' evaluation of the school's work and priorities for improvement. I reviewed a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding and behaviour. I met with five governors and held a separate meeting with your school's consortium director. I had a telephone discussion with a representative of the archdiocese. I reviewed a sample of pupils' work and we observed learning and behaviour in a sample of lessons. I held a formal discussion with a group of pupils in key stage 2 and spoke to others informally at lunchtime. I took account of 76 responses to Ofsted's online parents' survey, Parent View, including 35 written comments. I considered 10 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and 44 responses to Ofsted's online pupils' survey.