

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



19 April 2018

Mrs Michelle Ravey  
Headteacher  
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School  
Brunswick Street  
Parr  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
WA9 2JE

Dear Mrs Ravey

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, St Helens.**

Following my visit to your 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 monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- raise expectations of standards further so that pupils' learning improves rapidly and all make the gains that they are capable of
- ensure that teachers use their assessment knowledge to make quick adjustments to activities in lessons so that they match pupils' learning needs sufficiently
- fill the three vacancies on the governing body in order to broaden the skills with which governors challenge senior leaders.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, reading, writing and mathematics leaders and the office manager who is responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. We discussed the actions the school has taken since the last inspection. I also met with three members of the governing body, the representative of the archdiocese and a representative of the local authority. You and I visited classrooms to observe pupils at work. I met with a group of nine pupils to gain their views of the school and spoke to others informally. I observed pupils' behaviour around school and looked at some of the work in their books. I evaluated your improvement plan and considered other evidence, including documentation on the monitoring of teaching and learning, governing-body minutes and reviews undertaken by the local authority.

## **Context**

At the time of the last inspection in January 2017, staffing was unsettled either through illness or staff leaving the school. As a result, there were a number of temporary staff in post. Staffing is now much more stable across the school. As a result, the school is more settled. The governing body has a number of new members following the departure of some of the long-term governors.

## **Main findings**

Following the findings of the inspection in January 2017, you have galvanised your staff with your steadfast determination to make the changes necessary to get the school back on track. As a result, you and your deputy headteacher have now established a firm foundation on which to continue school improvement and accelerate pupils' learning.

You, your deputy headteacher and governors have a detailed and thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. You have used this information well to plan appropriate, well-defined actions to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Your development plan is appropriately structured, with suitable timescales and indications of what success will look like. This shows that you clearly know what needs to happen to move the school forward. The implementation of your plans has been effective in bringing about improvements to the school, most notably in establishing a consistency in the minimum expectations of staff and pupils across the whole school. A further improvement has been in the continuity of the way teaching and learning is approached. As a result, pupils are receiving a much more consistent experience and better standard of education.

A vital improvement since the previous inspection has been your commitment to developing your leadership team. At the time of the previous inspection, most leaders were very new to their areas of responsibility. You have made leaders much

more accountable for their areas of responsibility across the school. Leaders rise to this challenge with enthusiasm and confidence and are having a valuable influence on the changes that are increasingly evident throughout the school.

You have successfully set up a system for the regular, thorough monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment. You have conscientiously kept to your timetable and consequently leaders are often in classrooms observing lessons, looking at the quality of pupils' work, talking to teachers about pupils' progress and asking pupils about their learning. You were asked to ensure that pupils' progress is clearly defined and understood. This is now clearly the case, with a whole-school approach to assessing progress and attainment for individual pupils and groups of pupils during the course of the academic year.

With a more stable staff, you have been able to insist on a greater consistency of expectations of their approach to teaching. For example, you have embedded an expectation that there is a whole-school approach to teaching reading, writing and mathematics and developing pupils' skills to enable them to be resilient learners. All classrooms are resourced to an equally high standard. Adults have very positive, friendly and supportive relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils are getting a similar quality of experience and lesson content as they move through the different key stages in the school.

Older pupils told me that they have noticed the improvements that have been made in the school. Pupils say that the work they do is more challenging and that they have to think a bit more about what they are doing. They enjoy being encouraged to be more independent in their learning. For example, they are encouraged to edit their writing to make improvements to their work.

With a clear understanding of pupils' starting points, teachers work hard to provide activities that are interesting and engaging for them. From our learning walk together, it was clearly evident that pupils visibly enjoy their learning and have a positive attitude to their work and towards the adults that help them to learn. I was struck by pupils' excellent attitudes towards their learning in every class. Pupils told me that inappropriate behaviour is rare and most of the time their peers behave well in the classroom and around the school.

Teachers use the assessment information they have to plan work that broadly meets the needs of pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants check pupils' learning and progress in lessons, correcting errors and misconceptions. Adults develop pupils' skills to check and edit their own and each other's work and ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve. Occasionally, teachers do not make quick enough adjustments to activities during lessons so that they are sufficiently matched to pupils' learning needs and move them on in their learning. This includes the most able, but does not apply to them exclusively.

Progress across all current year groups and including disadvantaged pupils demonstrates the impact of better-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Key stage 1 pupils have had the benefit of good provision in the early years and this is illustrated in their progress. Current Year 6 pupils are showing significant improvements in progress. They have had the benefit of changes that you implemented almost four years ago. Now that the school is more settled and consistent foundations have been laid, you are aware that you need to raise expectation of standards further so that pupils learn more rapidly and all make the gains they are capable of.

You and your leadership team provide a stimulating curriculum which draws pupils in and develops their love of learning. You enrich pupils' experiences with a wide range of trips and visitors to the school. The high standard of pupils' artwork reflects the benefits of working with artists in residence. Similarly, Year 4's brass ensemble produced a high-quality sound after working with a visiting musician.

### **External support**

You have requested support from a headteacher of an outstanding school. This has proved beneficial in providing your staff with many opportunities to see best practice beyond your own school. You have invested time and money to enable staff to be coached both within and beyond the school. This is having a positive impact on raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. You and your staff told me that you have found the advice of and the opportunity to work with staff of other schools invaluable.

Since the previous inspection, the local authority has carried out termly reviews, the results of which closely match those of your own checks on how well your school is doing compared to other schools nationally.

An external review of the governing body took place within a month of the previous inspection. This, together with further training for governors, has led to a restructuring of governors' responsibilities. In addition, governors are now skilled in agenda setting and holding senior leaders to account for their actions. They demonstrate a genuine commitment to improving all aspects of school life. You ensure that governors have timely and accurate information so that they can carry out their roles in both supporting and challenging you and your leaders. However, the archdiocese has been slow to fill the three vacancies on the governing body, leading to a significant workload for current governors.

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 St Helens. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor

**Her Majesty's Inspector**