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Mrs J Parker
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Parker

Short inspection of St Malachy's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Governors and the highly effective leadership team share your ambition that all pupils will succeed. You and the staff ensure that St Malachy's RC Primary School is a highly inclusive school where every child matters.

Since the last inspection, you have been appointed to the role of headteacher. You have wasted no time in creating a new leadership structure which enabled you to implement many improvements across the school. Alongside this, you have developed a strong and highly skilled staff who are making many improvements in their areas of responsibility. Staff members' responses to the Ofsted's questionnaire were positive because staff enjoy working at the school. They feel supported and have many opportunities to learn new skills.

The members of the governing body are knowledgeable, and have a wide set of skills they use to challenge and support you. Governors know the school well. They understand the needs of the community, the staff and especially the pupils. Consequently, they have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are exceptionally proud of the school and were keen to tell me that the school provides 'an oasis of learning for all'.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, and thrive because of the extensive opportunities and experiences that they have access to. They are proud to be part of the community, or as they call it 'their family', and enjoy supporting and helping each other. Pupils with whom I spoke during the inspection were keen to tell me that if they are ever upset,

everyone comes to help. Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. They are articulate, confident and express their views clearly. Pupils enjoy the diverse community in which they live, and demonstrate respect for each other's differences.

The previous inspection report identified the need to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by ensuring that pupils know what they are learning and how they can improve. It was evident during the lessons we observed and the work in pupils' books that you have dealt with this effectively. Leaders rigorously monitor teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that teaching is of the highest standard. Pupils who need extra help to catch up receive targeted and timely support. Teachers plan learning activities which are accurately matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, the progress pupils make across the school is good. Finally, you were asked to ensure that pupils' work is always neat and well organised. Inspection evidence clearly demonstrated the pride pupils take in their work. Their handwriting and presentation are of a high standard, and pupils are keen to achieve their pen licence.

Leaders have a clear and accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You recognised that progress in reading needed to be accelerated, and as a result you have made this the school's top priority for improvement. Despite the improvements made, you agreed that they need longer to embed across key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff and governors receive regular training. Consequently, they all have a good understanding of their responsibility to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Rigorous checks are made on staff, governors and volunteers to ensure that they are safe to work with pupils. The school has well-developed contingency plans in case of leaders' absence. Several members of staff have been trained at the highest standard and if necessary are able to act as the designated safeguarding lead. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families are well supported.

Pupils feel safe and are extremely confident because adults look after them so well. They know how to stay safe, for example when using the internet or working online. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and they say that bullying does not happen. All the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were supportive of the school. They were all in agreement that their children were safe, happy and well looked after in school.

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these looked at how effective the leadership of reading is. This is because achievement in reading across the school is inconsistent. Additionally, pupils' progress in reading in key stage 2 in 2017 was in the lowest 10% of schools nationally. Leaders have taken decisive action to address this. You work effectively with the phonics and English lead and provide a united front. Together you are determined that all pupils will be successful

and confident readers. Monitoring is robust and highlights strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Consequently, staff are supported and have access to targeted training. To ensure that the teaching of reading and the progress pupils make are the highest priorities across the school, teachers are set specific targets as part of their performance appraisals. Leaders have carefully selected the core texts that pupils enjoy reading throughout the school. Pupils have access to a wide range of genres, which enables them to extend their vocabulary and read purposefully across the curriculum. As a result of actions taken by leaders, pupils' achievement in reading is rising.

- My second key line of enquiry looked at children's achievement in reading in the early years. For the last three years, the proportion reaching a good level of development has been above or at least in line with the national average. Children enter the school with skills below those typical for their age and with limited experiences. Children make an excellent start to their education in the early years, and this is a strength of the school. They develop their reading skills admirably across the indoor and outdoor learning areas, which are vibrant, creative and purposeful. Children are keen to read and write across different areas of provision. They enjoy the wide range of opportunities to read, and speak with excitement about what they are learning. Staff support children admirably. They ask relevant questions to deepen their learning and challenge them further. The early years leader evaluates the quality of teaching, learning and assessment regularly to ensure that children make strong progress, especially in their reading.
- Another area we looked at was the progress pupils are making in their phonic skills in Year 1. This is because the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been rising over the last four years and is now above the national average. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the early years and key stage 1. The phonics leader is knowledgeable, and determined that all pupils will achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1. She supports staff effectively and ensures that they receive relevant and high-quality training. Leaders systematically check pupils' progress and quickly intervene if pupils need extra support to catch up. Lessons are organised so that they meet pupils' individual needs and pupils read texts which accurately match their level of development. Pupils read to me with confidence and used their phonic skills to read unfamiliar words. School assessment information shows that the high standards in phonics are being maintained.
- The last key line of enquiry considered how effectively reading is taught in key stage 2. This is because in 2017, the progress pupils made was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Additionally, attainment in 2016 and 2017 was below the national average at the expected and higher standard. You have implemented a range of strategies to rapidly improve pupils' outcomes. External support has been used to advise, support and coach staff. There has been a range of training to ensure that staff have the necessary skills and understanding to teach reading at the highest level. The English leader has been given time to coach and develop the skills of staff, thus ensuring consistency in how reading is taught.
- Leaders have adapted the teaching of guided reading in key stage 2 so that it is more focused on developing key skills. This was clear in the lessons we observed, where teachers and teaching assistants were skilfully using questions to deepen and

challenge pupils' understanding of texts. Leaders have ensured that reading has been a whole-school priority, for example through competitions, awards and improvements made to the learning areas. As a result, the school's assessment information and the work in pupils' books confirm that pupils are making much stronger progress. Although the teaching of reading has improved significantly, the impact of this is less evident in accelerating key stage 2 pupils' progress in this skill than elsewhere in the school. You agreed that the progress pupils make in their reading in key stage 2 needs to remain as a school priority, so that greater proportions of pupils achieve at the expected and higher standard.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies to improve key stage 2 pupils' outcomes in reading are further embedded, so that greater proportions of pupils achieve at the expected and higher standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Barlow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I observed teaching and learning and scrutinised examples of pupils' work. I met with you, senior leaders, the English and phonics leader and the Reception class teacher. I spoke with a representative of the local authority and met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with six pupils in key stage 2 and with pupils informally in lessons and around the school. I also heard pupils read.

I evaluated the 27 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also took account of 28 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 14 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I reviewed a range of school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plans and assessment records, minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. I also considered information posted on the school's website.