

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Laura Lowney
Headteacher
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School and Nursery
Long Elmes
Harrow Weald
Harrow
Middlesex
HA3 6LE

Dear Ms Lowney

Short inspection of St Teresa's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are very ambitious for the school, and lead the school with compassion and clarity. Together with your hard-working leadership team, you have the full support and confidence of staff, parents, governors and pupils.

Since joining the staff this year, you have an accurate understanding of what the school does well, and where the school needs to improve. Senior and subject leaders are effective, and they support teachers well in classrooms. This has led to pupils making strong progress in phonics, mathematics and reading. Currently, the school is rightly focused on improving the progress pupils make in writing. You are particularly concerned that pupils learn to apply the knowledge of grammar and punctuation when writing for a range of audiences.

Governors are knowledgeable, and are routinely involved in the work of the school. They offer you strong strategic support. Working together, you have ensured that pupils gain a secure grasp of the basic skills expected for their age in reading and mathematics, which are emerging strengths of the school. Leaders have made improvements to the school since the previous inspection, especially in teaching.

Teachers give pupils very detailed information on where they have done well in their work and how to make it even better. This is proving successful, so that an increasing number of pupils are starting to achieve the higher standard in end-of-key-stage tests, particularly in mathematics and reading.

Pupils are fortunate to have a number of effective teaching assistants to work alongside them. They encourage pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, not to give up on work they find hard, and help them to overcome particular difficulties.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are complete. All checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in place. Clear systems exist for staff to make referrals when concerns arise, and subsequent actions are followed up promptly. Leaders work well with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive well-targeted support, when required. Staff training, including that related to the 'Prevent' duty, is up to date. Staff have a good knowledge of potential concerns within the local area. This increases their vigilance in spotting and reporting concerns about pupils' well-being.

The school has a very welcoming atmosphere, and pupils appreciate this. I observed and chatted with pupils, including during lunchtime, and they were relaxed and happy. They told me that they feel very safe in school, and that bullying is extremely rare at the school. They clearly enjoy coming to school and have great confidence that the staff work hard to support their education and well-being. Pupils behave very well and have extremely positive attitudes towards the school.

Parents appreciate the work that the school does, and are proud to be members of the school community, with several travelling some distance for their children to attend. Several parents commented that their experience of you and your staff is that of being deeply committed to the welfare and education of their children. The school is popular, and children really want to come to school each day. As a result, pupils' attendance is strong.

Inspection findings

- For the first line of enquiry, we agreed to look at key stage 2 pupils' progress in writing, particularly for the school's most-able pupils. This is because last year progress rates in writing were lower for this group than in reading and mathematics. You have rightly identified this as a priority.
- The school has taken several important steps to improve writing for all pupils. Teachers have received additional training and support from the school's subject leader. This has given them greater confidence to teach and assess writing in a way that ensures that pupils get more opportunities to write in ways that fully challenge them.
- The teaching of writing has shown improvement. During the inspection I saw how information about the quality of teaching is tracked, and feedback given to teachers that provides them with information that will improve their work. This has been helpful in improving teachers' approaches to the teaching of writing for all pupils and especially the most able.

- We saw evidence of this where pupils were guided by the teacher to write persuasive letters to the local constituency Member of Parliament. These so impressed him that not only did he visit the school but he has also invited pupils to meet with him at the Houses of Parliament.
- The school's approach to the teaching of early writing is effective, and pupils leave the early years with clear letter formation and a grasp of basic punctuation. These basic skills develop through the school, and the presentation of pupils' work is very good.
- However, the quality of writing for the most able pupils is inconsistent across key stage 1 and 2. The work that you have done to improve pupils' writing skills should remain a focus, so that improvements continue and are reflected in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2.
- For the second line of enquiry we looked at subjects other than English, science and mathematics. The school had identified that they want teaching to be as strong in these subjects as in the core subjects, and so we were curious to see if this is the case.
- The school curriculum is well planned to ensure the requirements of the national curriculum are met. Specialist staff teach some subjects, such as physical education (PE). Pupils achieve well in PE and love the work they do.
- In other subjects, such as history and religious education, the curriculum is rich and varied, so pupils achieve well. Good links are made between subjects to maximise learning opportunities. For instance, linking how the spread of Christianity took place across different periods of history and across many different continents.
- Teachers make very good use of home learning projects to engage with parents and extend pupils' learning. Pupils are proud of the practical skills they have acquired as they explored the habitat of Antarctica as part of work undertaken over the Easter break.
- Our final line of enquiry was to check whether the school's disadvantaged pupils are making the best progress possible, particularly those who are most-able. This was because, last year, there were differences between the progress of these pupils and others.
- Leaders make use of pupil premium funding in ways that target year groups and individuals where they believe most benefit would be seen. However, this is not always closely aligned to outcomes for these pupils. The school's current spending plan lacks detail, and the evaluation of the previous year's actions are imprecise. As a result, leaders cannot be totally sure about where their work is really making a difference.
- The school has a range of interventions and teaching strategies in place that are intended to strengthen the progress being made by disadvantaged pupils. This work would benefit from more systematic evaluation to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils, especially the most able, receive the support they need.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- rates of progress in writing for all pupils, including the most able, continue to rise in key stage 2
- the use of pupil premium funding is evaluated carefully to ensure that it is targeted at identified pupils in a timely way.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Westminster and the director of children's services for Harrow. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim McLoughlin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held several meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. I met with five governors and a representative from the local authority. I held informal discussions with parents in the playground, and considered the 86 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 47 written comments on the free-text facility. You and the deputy headteacher accompanied me on visits to classrooms. I talked to pupils about their learning, and looked at the 26 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I looked at pupils' books as they worked in lessons. Forty-one staff surveys were also completed and used to gauge the staff's opinion about working at the school. I also evaluated a range of school documentation, including school development plans, safeguarding records and information about current pupils' achievement.