

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Vincent Jones
St Clare's RC Primary School
Victoria Avenue
Blackley
Manchester
M9 0RR

Dear Mr Jones

Short inspection of St Clare's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 previous inspection. St Claire's is a caring and inclusive school, where pupils make good progress and attain highly. Together with your highly motivated deputy headteacher, senior leaders and governors, you have ensured that standards continue to improve, and teaching is good. Staff are highly motivated. They form a cohesive team, ensure they are abreast of developments in education and know precisely what the school is aiming to achieve.

Part of the school's Christian mission relates to 'teaching respect for self and others through the Catholic faith... maintaining a high standard of discipline and behaviour in an atmosphere of openness and shared responsibility'. These aspirations are evident in the daily life of the school. St Clare's is a friendly and purposeful school. Pupils are very positive about the school and are eager to talk about their learning. They benefit from an exciting and well-conceived curriculum, which takes account of their interests. It also provides many opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills to practical activities. Pupils I spoke with said that the best thing about school is 'the learning' and the support they receive from staff and their peers.

The overwhelming majority of parents speak highly of the school. All who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and those I spoke with, are of the view that their children are happy, safe and making good progress. Parents also say that their children are taught well. All would recommend the school.

Parents are especially complimentary about the school's work to support pupils with

special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), stating, 'The school is brilliant at identifying and meeting children's special educational needs.' Inspection evidence very much concurs with these views. The pupils I spoke with, including those with complex learning difficulties, feel supported and valued.

You have resolved the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. Your actions have helped teachers to improve the accuracy of pupils' writing and spelling, as well as the presentation of their work. Evidence of the impact of these changes can be seen in pupils' workbooks and in their high attainment in national assessments in 2018. At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling was above average. Similarly, pupils attained highly in writing at the end of key stage 1 in 2018. This represents good progress for pupils in both key stages.

Other issues we discussed, which require attention, relate to the school's website. At the start of the inspection, several aspects of the website did not meet the necessary requirements. For example, information on the spending and impact of the pupil premium funding on improving disadvantaged pupils' performance lacked clarity. While amendments were made during the inspection, some areas of the website are hard to navigate, making it difficult for visitors to gain a complete picture of the work of the school. We also discussed governance. Most governors have been in place for a long time. There is no doubt about their commitment and involvement in the life of the school. However, governors' understanding of how well different groups of pupils are performing is not precise enough. This curtails governors' ability to challenge senior leaders in some areas.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All staff have taken Prevent duty training. Training is being organised for next term to include all governors, and to ensure that leaders and staff are aware of the very latest government guidance on tackling radicalisation and extremism.

The school leaves nothing to chance when it comes to safeguarding pupils. This is particularly important in St Clare's given the high number of vulnerable pupils on role. All necessary checks are made so that leaders can be sure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Your records indicate that all staff are familiar with current government guidelines on keeping children safe in education. Designated safeguarding leaders are trained to a very high standard. As with all staff, they know how to spot signs of abuse and/or neglect. Procedures for reporting such concerns are clearly stated in the school's safeguarding policy, which is current and available on the school's website.

There is a highly positive culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders work effectively with parents and outside agencies to keep pupils safe and secure. Staff have strong bonds with pupils. This helps pupils to have confidence in talking to any member of staff if they have any concerns. Older pupils have an especially good

understanding of how to stay safe when using electronic means of communication and accessing the internet. All pupils understand various dangers and risks. Their understanding is supported by the information they receive from visitors from the fire, police and health services.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry I followed up during the inspection related to mathematics. During your previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that the mathematics curriculum allows pupils to develop their skills in a cohesive way. At the end of Year 6 in 2018, pupils' progress in this subject was good, and their attainment at the higher standard was above average. Similarly, at the end of key stage 1, pupils attained highly at both the expected standard and at greater depth in mathematics. Work in books indicates that pupils are currently making good progress in this subject across both key stages 1 and 2.
- You have adjusted the curriculum to ensure that pupils have many opportunities to apply their mathematics skills. This was recently exemplified when key stage 2 pupils set about the task of exploring the relationship between heart-rate and age after physical activities. Staff were involved in this activity and had to concede that there is a correlation between age and the rate at which the heart 'calms down' after exercise. Pupils diligently noted their findings, which helped develop their understanding of the function of the heart and lungs. Pupils' books show that work set in mathematics is challenging. The pupils I spoke with said they enjoyed the additional challenges available to them in mathematics. 'Teachers' work to develop pupils' fluency in calculations, use of times-tables and basic operations is firmly on the agenda. Such work ensures that pupils are well placed to enhance their depth of understanding in mathematics.
- My second line of enquiry focused on phonics. Although the proportion of pupils secure in their phonics skills and knowledge at the national check at the end of Year 1 has been similar to the national average for several years, a below-average proportion of boys and disadvantaged pupils met the standard in 2018. Your analysis of data, and the detailed information you hold on each pupil, shows that pupils who found it difficult to read in Year 1, are being well supported in Year 2. They are quickly catching up to their peers. Of the pupils I heard read, several found it difficult to read some words. However, they used their phonics skills well to sound out unknown words. Older pupils are making good progress in reading. They enjoy reading books by different authors and are extending their appreciation of different writing styles.
- My next line of enquiry centred on the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Their progress in reading, writing and mathematics was good at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. However, their attainment was below that of other pupils nationally. As indicated above, you take a stringent approach to data analysis and can pin-point each pupils' journey through the school. The 2018 Year 6 cohort contained a high proportion of pupils with SEND, most of whom were also disadvantaged. This had an adverse impact on the results for disadvantaged pupils.
- Currently, disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress in subjects such as

reading and writing. This is evident in their books and in class. For example, in a Year 2 class, disadvantaged pupils extended their vocabulary to improve their 'fairy story' writing by including words such as 'sinister' and 'wicked'. In Year 4, pupils improved their powers of persuasion in sentences such as 'the view is fantastic, it's a beautiful place to visit... we have a special discounted rate' when describing their unmissable, fictitious holiday deals.

- My final line of enquiry related to exclusions. Historic data indicates that there was an above-average proportion of fixed-term exclusions in 2017. Your records show that exclusions are rare and only ever administered as a last resort. For the last 18 months, there have been no exclusions of any kind.
- In St Clare's, you ensure staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and follow the school's behaviour policy. Pupils are exceptionally well behaved and conscientious. The pupils I spoke with were eager to tell me that behaviour is good most of the time. They stated that bullying is rare and always 'sorted out'. During the inspection, I observed good behaviour in lessons. Pupils move around the school sensibly and with consideration for others. Despite the excitement generated by the various Christmas activities taking place, pupils remained calm and measured. This was also the case with children in the Reception classes, as they proudly put on their nativity play, which was watched by a large group of applauding parents.
- St Clare's is a large primary school. Despite this, you manage to maintain a strong sense of community, ensuring that pupils want to come to school. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that pupils' attendance has been above average for at least the last three years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the information on the school's website is current and easily accessible
- governors have a thorough understanding of the academic performance of different groups of pupils, enabling them to challenge senior leaders.

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

Lenford White
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with other leaders, including those responsible for English, mathematics, science, art and physical education.

We visited classes across the school. In addition, I observed the Nursery class. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I had a discussion with a random sample of pupils. I also listened to pupils read and held a discussion with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I examined various documents, including action plans for English and mathematics and for the use of the pupil premium funding, alongside data on pupils' performance.

With senior leaders, I scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and looked at policies, including those for behaviour, safeguarding and the curriculum. I took account of parents' views at the start of the school day. I also considered two free-text messages from parents and 31 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I scrutinised 23 responses to the staff questionnaire and 229 responses to the pupils' survey. I also considered your own surveys of the views of parents and pupils.