

30 January 2019

Mr Darren Darbyshire
Headteacher
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
Eaves Green Road
Chorley
Lancashire
PR7 3QG

Dear Mr Darbyshire

Short inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Chorley

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2019, 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Following your promotion to headteacher after the previous inspection and the recent appointment of the deputy headteacher, you have acted decisively to build on previous strengths and improve the school further. You have galvanised the staff and focused on ensuring that standards in reading, writing and mathematics improve. You and the governing body are committed to the motto 'only the best will do'.

The governing body has a wide range of skills and is extremely dedicated to its role. Governors ask timely and challenging questions in order to hold leaders to account and assess the school's strengths and weaknesses. They challenge and support in equal measure. Governors visit the school regularly to check on the actions you are taking to improve outcomes. They also know the staff well and, as a result, they are aware of their responsibility to ensure that staff well-being is maintained.

Pupils' behaviour continues to be of a very high standard. Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. During the inspection, a number of pupils greeted me as I entered classrooms and held doors open for me. Pupils with whom I spoke said there is no bullying in school. However, they were confident that, if it did occur, it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.

The health and well-being of pupils are given a very high priority. You have invested in a number of initiatives and this investment is paying off. The school is part of the Chorley Sports Partnership, which gives pupils many opportunities to try new

activities and engage in competitive sport. There has been an improvement in pupils' fitness levels, because they regularly take part in activities, such as the daily mile and the 'NHS Change4Life' project.

The majority of parents and carers are happy with the education their children are receiving. A large number of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The vast majority would recommend the school to another parent. One typical comment was, 'A fantastic school that puts children's interests at the heart of everything they do'.

As a new headteacher, you have benefited from the support of a local authority adviser. You say that you have found this support valuable in helping to improve the school further.

You have responded well to the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection, and the quality of teaching has improved. You have been particularly proactive in enabling staff to share good practice. They work with each other across the school and work with colleagues in other schools to assess the quality of work in pupils' books. You have also ensured that teachers have access to a wide range of staff training. As a result, teachers have higher expectations of pupils' achievement, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are aware of what they do well and what they need to do to improve further.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have invested heavily in improving the outdoor provision in early years. Areas such as the mud kitchen, role-play area and garden complement indoor learning and give children the opportunity to play and learn in a stimulating environment.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders are extremely diligent in their approach to safeguarding. Staff receive regular written and verbal updates on safeguarding procedures from the deputy headteacher, and staff knowledge is checked by senior leaders. All staff are knowledgeable about the pupils in their care and know exactly which procedures to follow if they are concerned about a child. The procedures for the recruitment of staff are secure and ensure that suitable people are employed to work with pupils.

Pupils say that they feel safe and that adults in school keep them safe. They pointed out that the school grounds are very safe as the school has invested in a range of security measures in the last year, including a new security fence and closed-circuit television.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of lines of enquiry, the first of which examined whether or not the expectations for the most able pupils were high enough in writing. In 2017, the progress Year 6 pupils made in writing was not as

strong as that in reading and mathematics. There was an improvement in 2018, but the progress of the most able pupils was still below average at the end of key stage 2. You acted swiftly to address this. Current work in pupils' books shows that expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing are improving. They are making strong progress. Pupils are given many opportunities to write at length. They use a wide range of vocabulary and punctuation effectively. They write in a variety of styles and their writing is engaging. The school's current assessment information shows that an increased proportion of the most able pupils are writing at greater depth. However, handwriting is poor across the school. Letter formation is often inaccurate, and as a result, presentation is not always as good as it could be.

- Secondly, I looked at how well the curriculum was planned and implemented to ensure that pupils achieve well across a range of subjects, including science. The school has worked successfully to raise the profile of science in the last year. The subject leader is committed to ensuring that the subject is planned and taught well across the school. Her efforts are paying off, and there is a broad science curriculum that allows pupils to undertake investigations across a range of science topics and to learn about famous scientists. Pupils said that they enjoy science lessons. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed experiments they carried out to understand how sound travels. A new assessment system allows teachers to identify what pupils know and what they need to learn next. Consequently, pupils are making strong progress in science.
- The wider curriculum is broad and balanced and is enhanced by a number of visits and visitors. For example, Year 4 pupils recently visited a Victorian mill to help them learn about Chorley in the nineteenth century. However, pupils are not given sufficient time to study history and geography in depth and consequently, they only have a superficial understanding of the topics they study.
- Lastly, I looked at the provision for disadvantaged pupils. Despite a recent reduction in the funding you receive, the support that disadvantaged pupils receive is strong. In 2018, the progress these pupils made was at least in line with that of their peers, and by the end of Year 6 was better than that of other pupils nationally. Additional teachers are used effectively to support pupils to improve their reading and writing skills. In addition, pupils have access to a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, including trips and sports clubs. You have also made sure that if pupils need extra emotional support, you provide counselling facilities. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are confident and achieve well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils study history and geography in sufficient depth
- handwriting is improved in every year group.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Jackson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and members of the governing body. I spoke with a representative from the local authority and I talked with pupils in a meeting and in classrooms.

I took account of 72 responses to the online questionnaires for parents, Parent View, and 18 responses to the staff survey. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation document and school improvement plan and looked at the minutes of governing body meetings. I looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe.