

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 February 2019

Mrs Angela Emerton
Headteacher
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
Wash Lane
Latchford
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 1JD

Dear Mrs Emerton

Short inspection of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

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 March 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school has been through a period of turbulence since its last inspection. Standards of attainment dipped and there has been significant upheaval in staffing. On taking up the headship at Our Lady's in January 2017, you recognised the challenges that lay ahead and began to address them with great determination. Governors, too, recognised that they could be more effective in their roles and commissioned a review of governance, the recommendations of which are now starting to be implemented. The appointment of experienced deputy and assistant headteachers in the autumn term 2018 has added further leadership capacity, and there are positive signs that a corner has been turned and Our Lady's is once again moving in the right direction.

You acknowledge, though, that there is still further work to be done. Your efforts to improve the quality of teaching across the school have been largely successful, but pockets where teaching has been less effective over time remain. Where that is the case, pupils' attainment and progress are weaker. Evidence shows that you have also had some success in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Most-able pupils' attainment in reading has improved to be typically in line with that seen in other schools nationally, while pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2 is also strengthening. However, attainment in writing was

below average in key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2018, indicating that further improvement is required.

Pupils are well-mannered and welcoming to visitors. They behave well in class and around the school. Pupils were keen to tell me about the school's 'golden rules', which successfully promote good behaviour. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, as can be seen in their attentiveness in class and the care they take with their work. The school's curriculum provides pupils with a broad range of learning experiences, and pupils were particularly keen on the different trips they had been on, visiting places such as Beeston Castle and the theatre in Manchester. Pupils also said that they enjoyed attending after-school activities, which include singing, baking and mathematics clubs. Music is a particular strength at Our Lady's, and pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to learn different instruments and take part in concerts.

Pupils are very positive about their school, and the vast majority would recommend Our Lady's to a friend moving into the area. A small number of parents expressed concerns about some aspects of the school, particularly regarding the number of staff changes there had been recently. However, an equal proportion of parents were positive about the impact of the changes, and there is no doubting that senior leaders have pupils' best interests at the heart of the decisions that they make.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and has created a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Rigorous checks are carried out to make sure that staff, governors and regular visitors to the school are suitable people to work with children. Records of these checks, along with other records relating to safeguarding, are detailed and of a good quality. Parents and pupils are confident that their school is a safe place.

Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training and are clear about school policies and procedures for keeping children safe. Staff have a good understanding of possible signs of harm. Reporting procedures are rigorous, and leaders work well with other agencies to ensure that any concerns about pupils' welfare are quickly followed up and support is put in place where it is required.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these looked at how effectively writing is taught across the school. Improving the teaching of writing was an area for improvement identified in the last inspection report, and published data for 2018 raised questions as to how well these improvements had been addressed.
- Pupils' work in Years 1 and 2 showed that you have succeeded in addressing concerns about writing in key stage 1. Teachers have high expectations and set pupils challenging but interesting writing tasks. Pupils are responding well, and the most able pupils in Year 2 in particular are producing high-quality written

work.

- This quality of work is not consistently on view across the whole of key stage 2, however. While some of the most able pupils in Years 5 and 6 are producing work with greater depth, this is not the case in all classes. For too many pupils, teachers' expectations over time have not been high enough, and so pupils' work has lacked depth and accuracy. Teachers have also provided pupils with too few opportunities to practise and develop their written work in subjects other than English. Pupils' books showed that work in subjects such as science and history seldom requires pupils to write at any length. When pupils are asked to write in these subjects, too often little attention is then paid to ensuring that their writing is scientifically or historically accurate.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the teaching of phonics. For the past two years, a below-average proportion of pupils have reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- There have been significant changes in the teaching of phonics this year, and these are having a positive impact on pupils' phonic knowledge and understanding. Staff from early years have worked well with the new teaching team in key stage 1 to ensure that phonics is now taught in a well-planned and consistent manner. Staff have strong subject knowledge and model using phonics well. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the different games and activities that teachers plan for them. The proportion of pupils currently working at the expected level in phonics is rising.
- The third line of enquiry looked at how well leaders were addressing low rates of attendance and high rates of persistent absence, particularly affecting disadvantaged pupils. Last year, a quarter of disadvantaged pupils were classed as persistent absentees, and overall rates of attendance were well below average.
- The appointment of a pastoral manager, and leaders' commitment to improving pastoral support for pupils and their families, has had a very positive impact on pupils' attendance. Strong systems are now in place to follow up quickly on any pupil absences, and good support has been put in place for families where school attendance has been particularly problematic. Pupils strive to win attendance awards. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who have been persistently absent has halved this year, and overall attendance is improving strongly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- remaining inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching are eliminated, so that pupils are able to make strong progress in all year groups
- teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to develop and practise their writing skills in areas of the curriculum other than English
- recent changes to the way governors work are embedded, so that governors become more effective at holding leaders to account and driving improvements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Diocese of Shrewsbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warrington. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Neil Dixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you and other school leaders. I also had meetings with three members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority and diocese. I met a group of pupils to talk about school life. I considered 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with 17 free-text responses and one email. I also took into account nine responses to the staff survey and 31 responses to the pupil survey. I visited classes in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2, and I looked at examples of pupils' work. I also studied a range of documentation covering different aspects of the school's work.