

27 February 2019

Mrs Linda Chadwick
Headteacher
Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School
Beech Avenue
Farnworth
Bolton
Lancashire
BL4 0BP

Dear Mrs Chadwick

Short inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know your school well and are accurate in your judgement of where Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School is on its journey of improvement. The school has many strengths, including pupils' good behaviour; leaders' and staff's commitment to the welfare and care of pupils and their families; and the strong progress pupils make in key stage 2.

Pupils enter the Nursery and Reception classes with knowledge and skills below the standards typically expected for their age. From the early years and throughout the school, leaders have prioritised language acquisition and development as these are key barriers to learning. As a result of high-quality teaching and learning in each year group, pupils develop good language skills. This enables them to make good progress across key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Leaders, staff and governors have developed a warm and welcoming environment, with strong relationships between staff, pupils and their families. There is a real and tangible family ethos. Members of the school community appreciate your approach to establishing partnerships. Leaders are determined to raise aspirations for all pupils. As a result, the attainment of current pupils is continuing to improve and they are making good, and sometimes better, progress.

Pupils are polite, respectful of each other's opinions and viewpoints and are well mannered. They state that they enjoy lessons and appreciate the element of fun

that teachers provide. They value the variety of extra-curricular activities, including residential trips, day visits and various sports clubs.

The vast majority of parents feel that the school is very good at supporting their children and developing them academically. During discussions with me, parents typically commented that they are very pleased with their children's progress. Some stated, 'The staff are amazing.' Parents spoke positively about the smooth transition into the Nursery class and on to high school. The majority of parents ensure that their children attend school regularly, with attendance rates above national averages for all groups of pupils. Although some parents expressed concerns about communication from the school, the majority of parents were delighted with this aspect and readily accept the invitations to join in and watch their children's activities.

Leaders and staff have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You were asked to improve teaching and learning so more pupils make outstanding progress and reach the higher standard and greater depth, particularly in key stage 1. You have increased the effectiveness of assessment to ensure that pupils receive prompt and additional support to overcome their identified misconceptions. You have also ensured greater consistency in the quality of teaching, particularly in English, through the recruitment of effective teachers. Published data for 2018 shows that the school's consistently high rates of progress have been maintained at key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. Proportions of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in national tests have increased. However, in 2018 progress across key stage 2 in writing and the proportions of pupils attaining greater depth in writing were not as strong as those in reading and mathematics.

Pupils attain well in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1, although not enough achieve greater depth in each of these subjects. Leaders have already taken steps to resolve these issues. For example, they have further improved the teaching of both reading and writing through effective language support to challenge pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. In mathematics, leaders have continued to raise aspirations and provide opportunities to challenge and deepen pupils' thinking through problem-solving activities. These actions are beginning to bear fruit and are further improving the proportions of pupils attaining the higher outcomes in reading and mathematics at key stage 1.

Inspectors also asked leaders and governors to develop the skills of the governing body in analysing national data further so that they can challenge school leaders even more effectively. Governors have developed their roles further since the last inspection. They use a wide range of evidence about the school's work, including reports, visits to the school and presentations by staff, to gain information which enables them to hold leaders to account. As a result, they have an improved understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and are sensitively deployed. Leaders and governors fulfil statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff. Although the school's caseload is small, effective liaison with social care helps support and protect pupils from harm.

Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training. As a result, staff know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. They are very clear about the school's procedures for reporting and recording the few concerns they have regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders are tenacious, but sympathetic, in their work to protect vulnerable pupils.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection state that bullying and poor behaviour are rare in the school and have confidence in the staff to deal with problems when they arise. However, a minority of parents expressed concerns over this issue. Inspection evidence shows that incidents are rare and, where they do happen, leaders work with parents and pupils to address them to the satisfaction of the majority of parents.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have implemented clear programmes to teach pupils about personal and internet safety. Pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and report concerns to staff.

Inspection findings

- Attainment and progress at the end of key stages 1 and 2 have improved over the last few years because of the actions you have taken to develop the quality of teaching and learning. However, in 2018 girls' achievement was stronger than that of boys. My first line of enquiry, therefore, was to find out what you have done to address this difference. We discussed the high proportion of boys with special educational needs in the Year 6 cohort last year and the impact they had on the 2018 results.
- In writing, the work in pupils' books indicates improving progress over time for both boys and girls. Both boys and girls are developing a growing understanding of a wider range of sentence structures. Older pupils are able to sustain their ideas over longer pieces of writing and make good links across paragraphs. Rightly, you are now turning your attention to ensuring that as many pupils as possible, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve at greater depth in writing.
- Mathematics books show similar progress for both boys and girls. The majority of pupils are making good progress from their starting points, with increasing numbers making even greater progress. Pupils in key stage 1 handle larger numbers with confidence and are able to calculate effectively. Key stage 2 pupils' books show that they can calculate with increasingly complex numbers and are able to apply their understanding to more challenging problem-solving questions.

- My second line of enquiry was to find out more about the effectiveness of teaching and learning of pupils in key stage 1, especially disadvantaged pupils. While attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 was broadly in line with national averages, fewer pupils attained greater depth and disadvantaged pupils' achievement was below national averages at both the expected standard and greater depth.
- The teaching of writing in the Nursery and Reception classes has improved and is more focused. As a result, pupils, especially those who speak English as an additional language, enter key stage 1 with a wider vocabulary and an increased understanding of sentence structures. Despite this, the writing of a large proportion of disadvantaged pupils lacks the control and accuracy required to meet the expected standard at the end of Year 2. You have implemented a programme of language interventions and a higher level of support from teaching staff to help identified pupils achieve as they progress through key stages 1 and 2. This tight focus on addressing pupils' identified needs through additional speech and language support is beginning to have a positive impact. The attainment of key stage 1 pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language, has improved.
- In key stage 1, pupils make good progress in reading because teachers provide a varied programme which includes individual support, opportunities to read during the day and guided-reading sessions. In mathematics lessons, teachers plan work which is focused on pupils' identified needs. Teachers' explanations enable pupils to understand new ideas and answer questions confidently. Current assessment information for key stage 1 pupils shows that the majority are on track to attain in line with the expected level for pupils of the same age in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are now focusing your attention on ensuring that pupils achieve all they are capable of at greater depth.
- Finally, I considered how well leaders have implemented and monitored the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics. They have used training and the advice from consultants to enhance teaching and their own leadership skills. Most of your subject leaders have a clear understanding of the purpose and intent of their curriculum. They have ensured that subject-specific skills are encouraged and developed through training and sharing good teaching practice. Inspection evidence shows that where this approach is consistently applied there is clear progression in both teaching and learning. In some subjects, such as geography and music, leaders' monitoring is well-organised and further improvements are discussed in staff meetings. Effective use is made of external organisations and experts, for example sports coaches, to raise expectations of the school's curriculum and achievement, especially at the higher standard. However, there are some subjects where the monitoring of, and progression in, the curriculum is not as strong. In these subjects, pupils' achievement could be higher.
- As a result of some subject leaders' actions, the quality of pupils' work in their subjects is improving. However, pupils' work also shows that opportunities to deepen their understanding and knowledge in subjects other than English and mathematics are not well developed and too few pupils reach the higher standards leaders expect of them.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the teaching of writing to enable more pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, to attain greater depth at key stages 1 and 2
- they improve attainment in subjects other than English and mathematics further, by:
 - ensuring that progression through a rich curriculum is effectively planned
 - providing opportunities for subject leaders to gain a better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects
 - ensuring that there is greater challenge for the most able, allowing them to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, your staff and members of the governing body. I also met with pupils to seek their views about the school. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I also spoke with pupils informally in the classroom and at lunchtime.

We observed teaching and learning together and I scrutinised pupils' writing and mathematics across the school. I also looked at work in subjects other than English and mathematics, alongside subject leaders.

I examined and discussed a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and improvement priorities. I looked at the school's self-evaluation and assessment information.

I considered the views expressed by parents gathered in the playground before the start of the school day and 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.