

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



1 March 2019

Mrs Diane Gallagher
Headteacher
St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School
Buller Avenue
Penwortham
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 9QQ

Dear Mrs Gallagher

Short inspection of St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with all staff and governors, you have created a warm, welcoming and inclusive learning environment. Leaders and managers pride themselves on the support offered to pupils and their philosophy of never turning families away. The school is recognised for its inclusivity.

You were rightly extremely proud of the results in the 2018 national tests. Pupils in Year 6 made extremely strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils leave school well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Behaviour in the school is excellent. Pupils are very proud of their school. Older pupils look after younger pupils through a 'buddy' system. Pupils are polite and well-mannered and say that everyone gets along together. As a result, they say that there is no bullying and if it were to occur, they are confident adults would deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Leaders, including governors, place a strong emphasis on staff development. The school works very closely with a local group of schools to provide a range of training and coaching for staff. In addition, teachers are encouraged to develop their leadership roles. You take the well-being of staff very seriously. You have found innovative ways to ensure that teachers have a reasonable workload and work-life balance. This contributes to the effectiveness of teaching.

Ensuring that pupils have healthy lifestyles is a very high priority for the school. Pupils have many chances to engage in physical activity. The range of after-school clubs and opportunities for competitive sport are extensive. For example, pupils can

attend running, gymnastics and Zumba and a number of pupils are sports leaders who lead sports events and help to organise competitions.

The vast majority of parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school's work and hold you and your staff in high regard. They particularly value the supportive, family atmosphere in the school. A comment from one parent typifies the views of others: 'Overall, it's a fantastic learning environment for all involved.'

You have responded well to the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection and as a result the quality of teaching of mathematics has improved. You have implemented a new approach to the teaching of mental mathematics and this means that most pupils are now working at the standard expected for their age. You also ensure that performance-management targets are closely linked to pupils' achievement. This contributes to the strong progress that pupils make.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and keeping pupils safe is a high priority. Staff are well trained and receive regular updates through meetings and e-mail to ensure that they have the most recent and relevant information. They know what to do if they are worried about a child. They are familiar with the electronic system for recording concerns and leaders work hard to ensure that no pupils slip through the net. Leaders also ensure that the recruitment of staff is robust and that all appropriate checks are carried out on new staff.

Staff have excellent relationships with families and this allows them to both support and challenge families. Pupils' well-being is at the heart of everything they do.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in the school. They said that staff work hard to keep them safe, including making sure that the playground is secure and teaching them how to stay safe on the internet. They know they can tell someone if they are concerned about something or they can use the 'worry box' to share their concerns.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on four lines of enquiry, the first of which was the quality of boys' writing in key stage 2. Pupils made extremely strong progress in writing in 2018. However, boys' progress was not quite as strong as that of girls. Current school assessment information shows that an increasing number of boys are working at the higher standard in writing. Work in pupils' books shows that they are given regular opportunities to write at length. Work is well presented and pupils use a variety of punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structure to make their writing interesting and engaging.
- Next, we looked at the quality of teaching of reading in key stage 1. This was because the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check fell below the national average in 2018. I found that phonics is taught systematically in the early years and key stage 1 and as a result a greater proportion of pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard in the phonics check this year. There is evidence in pupils' books of their ability to build unfamiliar words using their phonic knowledge. In Year 2, pupils are given

the chance to practise their comprehension skills. They can retrieve, deduce and predict information in the books they read. The pupils I heard read were able to read with fluency and expression. Pupils make effective progress in reading.

- My third key line of enquiry was to check how well subjects other than English and mathematics were taught. Pupils are given a wide range of curriculum opportunities. For example, they are involved in dance projects, they learn a musical instrument in Year 4 and all pupils take part in weeks dedicated to the arts and design and technology. The curriculum is also complemented by visits to other places. Pupils have visited Keswick, a Roman museum and the local park. The teaching of science is developing. Pupils are given increasing opportunities to do practical investigations and experiments and to learn about famous scientists. However, the teaching of history and geography is not as strong. Lessons lack depth and pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills related to these subjects.
- Finally, I looked at the provision for pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities (SEND) and the progress they make. The support these pupils receive is strong. You diligently track the progress of pupils and you provide detailed individual plans to ensure that all staff know how to meet their needs. Support and targeted teaching ensure that pupils have access to the whole curriculum. Parents particularly value the work of the school when their children require extra support. The work you do means that these pupils are happy and make strong progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching in history and geography improves.

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 to a representative of the local authority and I talked with pupils in a meeting and in classrooms. I also heard some pupils in Year 2 read. I took account of 31 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and 29 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 governors' meetings. I looked at safeguarding and evaluated the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe.