

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



20 March 2019

Mrs Lisa Schaberg  
Headteacher  
St Alban's Catholic Primary School  
Heron Flight Avenue  
Hornchurch  
Essex  
RM12 5LN

Dear Mrs Schaberg

### **Short inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following taking up the post of headteacher in September 2015 and a significant turbulence in staffing, you have managed to create a safe and caring environment where pupils love to learn. Your passionate commitment to the school is evident. You know your pupils well and are clear about achieving the best for them and for the staff you lead. All staff who responded to the online inspection survey agree that they are proud to work at a school where leaders do all that they can to ensure that there is a motivated, respected and effective team.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Comments on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, praise the efforts of you and your staff in creating a welcoming school where their children can thrive. As one parent commented: 'St Alban's provides a safe, caring and nurturing environment. I feel completely confident leaving my child here each day.'

Leaders and governors demonstrate clearly that they have a very good understanding of where the school is successful and also what steps leaders need to take to improve further. They have already demonstrated success in a number of areas. The school has tackled all the areas for improvement recommended at the last inspection. For example, the proportion of most-able pupils that exceed expectations in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6 has been above the national average for the past two years. Inspectors at the last inspection also recognised that leaders at all levels needed to be more involved in improving teaching and learning through carrying out rigorous checks. This recommendation

has also been successfully addressed.

Classroom visits showed the school to be a happy place. Pupils were exceptionally well-behaved, working hard and proud to show me their work. Staff are knowledgeable about the pupils in their classes.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are effective and fit for purpose. Acting as designated safeguarding leader, you are thorough in your work. Your records are detailed and well organised. Staff are quick to report concerns and you follow up these concerns effectively and in a timely manner. As a result of good quality training, staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding processes. There is, therefore, a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

Leaders do not shy away from referring their concerns to external agencies when needed and challenging those agencies if support for pupils is not forthcoming. Leaders and governors are aware of, and take steps to limit, local risks to pupils' well-being, including the need to prevent pupils from being exposed to radicalisation.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they say that bullying rarely happens, and, when it did, they would tell an adult immediately. Pupils are supportive of each other and they all play well together regardless of age or gender. One pupil summed this up when saying: 'We are all part of one family so we take care of each other.' Pupils understand some of the dangers related to use of the internet and were able to explain what to do to stay safe when online.

### **Inspection findings**

- In the last national assessments, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who were high achieving at key stage 1 did not make as strong progress. This was even though the percentage of pupils attaining the higher standard in reading and mathematics was above the national average. You have identified this and are focused on improving the challenge offered to the high-attaining pupils in key stage 2. The English and mathematics leaders explained how this is being emphasised through training for the staff on how to provide challenge for the most able pupils. Work in pupils' books shows that they are now being challenged with more difficult tasks. Work in mathematics is planned carefully so that it is sequential and develops pupils' knowledge over time. Teachers are skilled at questioning pupils to check their understanding of mathematical concepts and to ensure that there are no misconceptions. However, pupils do not have many opportunities to apply their mathematical understanding to solve problems.
- Girls in Years 2 and 6 performed less well than boys in the last national assessments. Leaders have successfully addressed this by reviewing teaching approaches to ensure that girls are equally challenged. Progress meetings held

twice a term to focus on girls who are underachieving, as well as others groups, provides teachers with a greater understanding of how to vary their teaching styles to address this issue. Intervention groups and redesign of the curriculum to target the underperforming girls is resulting in them performing as well as boys. Evidence from books seen and data provided from the school confirm this.

- Leaders understand the need to prioritise improving the quality of education for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Staff understand the importance of ensuring that this vulnerable group, many of whom have additional needs, are supported well and challenged to do their best. They also understand that these pupils still need to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school if their achievements are to improve to match those of other pupils. This is a priority for school improvement going forward.
- Attainment in reading and writing at key stage 1 has been variable since the last inspection. In 2018, Year 2 pupils' attainment in both reading and writing was below the national average. You have reviewed the teaching of reading and writing. Leaders have introduced new approaches designed to improve the variety and flow of pupils' writing. Leaders' emphasis is on improving access to a greater range of high-quality reading texts. Pupils are exposed to skilled writers and high-quality texts. This is also having a positive impact on reading and writing. Pupils are taught how to use language in a powerful and interesting way and most are able write in detail and at length according to their age. Many elements of pupils' reading and writing have therefore improved. Even so, the work I saw in some pupils' books showed that they would benefit from more opportunities to write at length.
- The attendance of pupils, even though it is above the national average, is improving. You have sought external support to help improve pupils' attendance and are now monitoring absence levels of those who are persistently absent more carefully. When the attendance of individual pupils falls below an acceptable level, you take quick action to highlight the problem and work with families to overcome barriers to school attendance.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more opportunities are provided for pupils to apply mathematical skills to problem solving
- pupils have greater opportunities to write at length in English.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of education for the Diocese of Brentwood, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Havering. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Danvir Visvanathan  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I carried out the following activities during the inspection: a scrutiny of the single central record of recruitment checks and other documents related to safeguarding and child protection, including the school's safeguarding policy; a review of other documents related to governance, pupils' behaviour and attendance; meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, four governors and a local authority representative; a review of the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans; observations of learning across the school and a scrutiny of work in pupils' writing, mathematics and wider curriculum books; observations of pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime; conversations with a group of pupils and with pupils in lessons, in the playground and in the dining hall; and a review of the 31 responses to Parent View, including written comments in the free-text facility, 76 responses to the pupil survey and 25 responses to the staff survey.