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Mrs Catherine Gordon  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Gordon

### **Short inspection of Our Lady's RC Primary School Manchester**

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 good in July 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The leadership team is knowledgeable and highly experienced. They have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. Over the last few years they have continued to take effective action to address the school's weaknesses. This has contributed to leadership being a key strength of the school.

Leaders check carefully on the quality of teaching and learning across the school and ensure that this is of the highest standard. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and you use this information to provide additional support for pupils who need to catch up. This has contributed to the standards across the school rising and pupils making stronger progress.

The Catholic ethos is at the heart of everything you do in school. It has helped to create an environment that is welcoming, nurturing and highly inclusive. Across the school, the mission statement is displayed visibly and followed by all. Leaders are of the belief that the school is 'one big family'. This view is also held by pupils, staff and families.

Governors make a strong contribution to the leadership of the school and they know their school and community well. Over the last few years, they have reviewed their own skills and identified any areas of weakness. This information has been used to actively recruit new governors. As a result, the challenge and support they provide you with are highly effective.

Staff morale is high. They are supportive of leaders and value the range of training opportunities they have access to, which help them continue to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff who responded to the Ofsted's staff survey all state that they are proud to be part of 'Our Lady's family'.

The pupils that I spoke with are equally proud of their school. They value their education because of the excellent relationships they have with each other and the staff. Pupils behave exceptionally well in class and around the school. They are confident and inquisitive and have highly positive attitudes to learning.

Parents are overwhelming supportive of the school. All the parents that responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, would recommend the school to others. One comment summed up by many positive views of parents: 'Our Lady's is an excellent school. It is a safe, happy environment for learning, with strong leadership.'

Leaders and governors have an accurate and thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use this to inform action to further improve the quality of provision. Consequently, most of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. However, improvements related to pupils' writing became a key line of enquiry during the inspection, the details of which are reported on in the inspection findings on page 3.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and at the core of the school's ethos. Record-keeping is systematic, and information is stored securely. Staff and governors receive a wide range of relevant training, which is updated regularly. As a result, they are clear what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' safety or well-being. Appropriate checks are made on staff and visitors, and the maintenance of the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks is thorough.

Pupils, staff and parents are all in agreement that pupils are safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how they can stay safe on personal computers and mobile phones and in the local community. Pupils enjoyed their 'bike ability' lessons where they learned how to use their bikes safely on the roads. Those that I spoke with said that bullying did not happen. They were also keen to tell me that behaviour had improved a lot in the last few years, because of the actions that leaders had taken.

### **Inspection findings**

- As part of this inspection, I focused on several lines of enquiry. The first considered the attendance of pupils. This was because over the last three years attendance has been low and persistent absence high, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have ensured that there are effective systems to check pupils' attendance and punctuality. Leaders act swiftly when they have any concerns regarding pupils' attendance. They are not afraid to challenge and support parents to improve their children's attendance.

Leaders work closely with external agencies to provide help and targeted support for families if their children's attendance is a concern. As a result of leaders' actions, the proportion of pupils who are absent or persistently absent from school, including pupils who have SEND, has reduced this year.

- My next line of enquiry looked at how leaders are improving outcomes in key stage 1 at the higher standard in reading and mathematics. In mathematics, strong leadership has supported teachers to be more consistent in promoting pupils' fluency. Evidence in lessons and the work in pupils' books shows that pupils are confident with their basic skills and have regular opportunities to develop their mathematical fluency at an advanced level. Current school assessment information shows that the most able pupils are making stronger progress in their learning. However, some teachers do not always plan learning tasks that enable pupils to apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills and as a result, the most able pupils are not always challenged.
- Developing a love of reading has been given high priority. Teachers use interesting, high-quality texts as a focal point for teaching across the curriculum. Teachers have received a range of effective training to deepen their knowledge and skills. Staff hear pupils read regularly, which helps to develop pupils' fluency and accuracy when reading aloud. Pupils who read to me told me how much they enjoyed reading and how they read lots of books at home. As a result of leaders' actions, pupils' progress is much better, and the proportion of pupils that achieve at the higher standard has been in line with the national average. Although the teaching of reading is good, leaders are not complacent and have identified that they need to develop pupils' comprehension and vocabulary further in key stage 1, so that the most able pupils achieve to the best of their abilities.
- I also focused on pupil premium funding and what leaders do to support disadvantaged pupils to catch up. This was because the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 has remained lower than that of other pupils nationally. Leaders have given careful thought to how they support disadvantaged pupils with pupil premium funding. Barriers to learning have been identified, for example language and communication in Reception and key stage 1, and pupils' phonic knowledge. Disadvantaged pupils are carefully tracked, and they receive a range of support and interventions. To ensure that their needs are met, you have employed an additional teacher and teaching assistants to facilitate small-group sessions and individual support for pupils so that they can catch up. It is evident from a review of pupils' books and information that the school provided that disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to that of their peers.
- Finally, I looked at the progress that pupils were making in their writing across key stage 2. Leaders have prioritised writing for all pupils in the school's improvement plan this year. Most teachers are skilled at teaching writing because leaders have provided effective training to strengthen teachers' knowledge and skills. They plan lessons that build up the technical skills and vocabulary needed so that pupils make strong progress. There are regular opportunities for pupils to review and improve their learning, through drafting and editing. Across the school, writing displays celebrate pupils' learning across the curriculum. Current

school assessment information and the work in pupils' books show that pupils are making good progress. This is because strategies to improve the teaching of writing have been effective. However, the teaching of writing is not yet consistently strong across all year groups. Further time is needed to embed these improvements so that pupils' progress is as strong as it is in reading and mathematics.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are consistently challenged to use and apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics lessons in key stage 1
- pupils' comprehension and vocabulary improve in key stage 1, so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve at the higher standard
- improvements in pupils' writing are embedded, so that pupils make even stronger progress across key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Barlow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I observed teaching and learning and scrutinised examples of pupils' work. I met with you, senior and middle leaders and the business manager. I spoke with pupils in key stage 2 and with pupils informally in lessons and around the school. I also spoke with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I took account of the 34 free-text responses from parents. I took account of 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the five responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's self-evaluation; the school's development plans and assessment records; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. I considered information posted on the school's website.