

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



4 July 2019

Mrs Lisa Ashton
Headteacher
Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary
Fleming Field
Shotton
Durham
County Durham
DH6 2JQ

Dear Mrs Ashton

Short inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have responded fully to the areas for improvement that were identified when the school was last inspected. At that time, your middle leaders were new to the school and still finding their feet. Consequently, you were asked to further develop their role. Since then, you have guided their development carefully. They have benefited from the good training opportunities you have arranged for them. Together with you and your deputy, they have formed an extended senior leadership team and now make a considerable contribution to shaping the curriculum and checking on standards of teaching and learning. This investment in their development has already proved wise, because the school has been able to maintain a steady course through a turbulent period. The school has, over the last year or so, coped well with several periods of staff absence, including a period when your deputy successfully led the school in your absence.

The last inspection also identified a need to improve outcomes further. Since then, pupils have steadily made more rapid progress across key stage 2 and standards of attainment have risen. Last year, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well above the national average. Pleasingly, the proportion of pupils who attained the higher standard in these subjects was also better than that seen nationally. This indicates that your

most able pupils are being challenged effectively, and leave the school well placed to be successful in secondary education.

The school continues to have a positive ethos and culture in which all pupils are encouraged to 'let their light shine'. Pupils told me they look forward to coming to school on a morning because they enjoy their work. I found pupils to be kind towards one another and mutually supportive. This was evident from the warm applause and encouragement older pupils gave to the Year 1 class as they presented highlights from topics they have covered this year in the morning's assembly. In my discussions with pupils, they were clear that there is next to no bullying in school and that standards of behaviour are excellent. The school provides a warm, nurturing environment from the start of breakfast club in the morning, through to the broad range of activities available after the school day ends.

It was clear from my discussions with you and your staff that it is an exciting time for the school. The number of pupils on roll has continued to grow, outcomes have improved, and pupils show commitment to learning through their positive attitudes and good attendance. You remain ambitious, however, and keen to improve the school further. You recognise that you need to do more to ensure that your curriculum is fully meeting pupils' needs and that all of your teachers have the necessary skills to implement your new curriculum plans effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have fostered well a very vigilant safeguarding culture. You have impressed on your staff that 'it could happen here'. You make very thorough and systematic checks on all adults who work in or visit the school. You ensure that your staff are regularly trained to appreciate the risks children face. The training you provide for your staff includes carefully chosen safeguarding scenarios, designed to help your staff reflect on issues such as extremism or children being exploited to sell drugs. Consequently, your staff know how to respond if they have any concerns about a pupil's safety.

You have good arrangements in place to check on pupils' welfare and to keep your staff briefed. The school provides good support through your counsellor and parent support worker to your more vulnerable pupils and families facing difficulties. Some parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, commented positively on the strong community role the school plays.

Inspection findings

- The school is continuing to provide a good quality of education. Children make a good start in the Reception class. They enter the school with skills that are, on average, below those typical for their age. By the end of the Reception Year, an average proportion of children reach the standards expected for their age. In recent years, pupils have made increasingly good progress across key stage 1

and key stage 2. Pupils currently in the school are also making good progress. Typically, your disadvantaged pupils keep up with their peers and attain similar standards. My checks on pupils' workbooks showed me that they take care and considerable pride in their work. In English, the quality of their writing has improved markedly across the year and in mathematics, pupils show a good grasp of topics and an ability to apply their knowledge to solving challenging problems. However, you expect outcomes at the end of key stages 1 and 2 to dip a little this year. This is because you have greater numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the Year 2 and Year 6 classes. Although unlikely to attain the standards expected for their age, these pupils are making good progress from their lower starting points because of the well-considered extra help they receive.

- On this inspection, I chose to look closely at how the school teaches early reading skills in the Reception and key stage 1, because the proportion of pupils achieving the standard in the Year 1 phonics check was below the national average in 2017 and 2018. I found that you give the teaching of reading a high priority. Improving reading is central to your school improvement plan and you are clear in your ambition that every pupil needs to be a fluent reader by the end of key stage 1. You recognised that children had not been progressing quickly enough through your phonics programme and consequently were falling behind where they should be for their age. As a result, you have set clear milestones, setting out what children should know by the end of each term in Reception and Year 1. As a result, the pace of phonics teaching has quickened this year. You also now make sure pupils take both fiction and non-fiction books home more frequently to help foster a love of reading. This year, the proportion of pupils achieving the standard in the phonics check has jumped up, indicating that the changes you have made are helping.
- I did identify that some aspects of early reading teaching can be improved further. For example, when children in Reception were being taught a new sound, some needed to repeat matching the sound to the letters more often. We also observed how some pupils in Year 1 found it difficult to apply their phonics knowledge to writing because they were not sitting comfortably at a table. It was also clear that the few pupils who fell short of the expected standard in the phonics check this year do not have secure phonics knowledge. For example, when I listened to them read, they could not recognise split digraphs and were uncertain on some single letter sounds. This indicates that the extra support these pupils have been given has not addressed the gaps in their knowledge.
- I also looked at the breadth of the school's curriculum. In our discussions at the beginning of the day, you acknowledged that this was a current area of focus because your efforts to improve standards in reading, writing and mathematics had caused the curriculum to narrow somewhat. My checks on pupils' workbooks showed that coverage of subjects such as history, geography and art was variable and, in some cases, topics had been covered superficially. There was some good practice. For example, Year 4 pupils had learned a lot about the Romans and displays showed me that the 'Year of Science' had provided some rich opportunities for pupils to investigate the world around them.
- In response, your curriculum planning is advancing well. Your schemes of work

have begun to set out more clearly the knowledge you want to teach in each subject discipline and teachers have identified the most important subject-specific vocabulary they need to teach. Your timetable for next year has been reworked to give more discrete time to each national curriculum subject. There is a tangible sense of enthusiasm from the staff for the new curriculum you will implement from September.

- The school's governors are providing strong strategic leadership. They are very knowledgeable about the school and understand how well it is performing. They evaluate the difference leaders' actions are making and review assessment information closely to check whether different groups of pupils are making the progress they should. Consequently, their scrutiny, support and challenge are helping the school to move forwards. You told me that, from September, it is very likely you will begin a new role as an executive headteacher. The governors are supportive of this and are thinking carefully about how best to use the depth of leadership skills that have been developed within the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further refine aspects of the teaching of early reading and writing, and ensure that extra teaching provided for pupils who fall behind in the phonics programme helps them to catch up quickly
- pupils acquire more knowledge and a deeper understanding across the wider curriculum in subjects such as history and geography.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the subject leaders for English and mathematics. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. I talked to two groups of pupils and listened to some Year 1 pupils read. I observed an assembly which was attended by parents of pupils in Year 1. Together, you and I visited most classes to look at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. During lesson visits, I checked some pupils' books and talked to some pupils about their learning and progress. The English and mathematics

subject leaders and I looked in detail at some pupils' books. The sample of books selected covered pupils' work in different subjects across key stages 1 and 2. I looked at the 27 responses to Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff or pupil survey. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness and improvement planning, policies, assessment information and attendance data. I also checked other documents available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school and the quality of the school's approach to teaching reading. I also considered the breadth and balance of the curriculum, the work of governors and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.