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17 July 2019

Mrs Maureen Hillsdon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hillsdon

Short inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 July 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leadership at all levels is a real strength at Our Lady of Lourdes. You and your fellow senior leaders have high ambitions for the ongoing success of the school, and have ensured that all leaders play an effective part in moving the school forward consistently. You have secured the overwhelming support of the staff, parents and carers, and virtually all of the respondents to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to other parents.

Pupils are polite and give visitors a warm welcome. The very high standards of behaviour around school seen at the previous inspection have been maintained, and pupils benefit from having access to attractive and well-resourced outdoor areas at breaktimes. You have cleverly knitted together the messages from your school code of conduct with work on British and Gospel values to create an inclusive, nurturing, Christian ethos that pupils understand and fully support. Pupils show care and consideration for others, both in school and more widely. Pupils are encouraged to take on positions of responsibility, such as sitting on the school or eco councils, and are confident that school leaders listen to their views and ideas.

Pupils display very positive attitudes to learning. They work well together and take obvious pride in their work, as can be seen in the high standards of presentation in their books and the high-quality, very striking artwork displayed in the corridors. Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely strong. Pupils say that they really appreciate the great variety of enrichment activities that they can take part in, and are particularly proud of the school's regular successes in a wide range of

sports.

You have ensured that the areas for improvement identified when the school was last inspected have been addressed. There are very clear examples in pupils' work of the most able pupils in school being stretched and challenged, and the provisional outcomes of this year's tests in key stages 1 and 2 show an increase in the proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards or working at greater depth. Pupils also have the opportunity to use their English and mathematics skills in other areas of the curriculum, such as when drawing line graphs to illustrate the outcomes of a science experiment.

You also recognise that there are areas in which provision could improve still further. You are particularly concentrating on making sure that teaching in subjects such as history and geography provides sufficient depth to pupils' learning, to complement the breadth that the curriculum already offers.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has successfully established a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Staff and governors regularly receive safeguarding training, and staff knowledge is also assessed to ensure that training has been effective. Staff know exactly what to do if they are worried about a pupil's welfare. There are robust recording procedures in place, and the school works well with other agencies to ensure that any safeguarding concerns are dealt with promptly.

Leaders make sure that appropriate checks are made on staff, governors and regular visitors to the school to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children. Records of these checks, along with other arrangements relating to safeguarding, are detailed, of a good quality and fit for purpose. Pupils say they feel safe in school, and parents overwhelmingly agree with this view.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these considered how well the most able pupils in the school are being challenged by the work provided for them. This had been an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection, and results since then had indicated some potential inconsistencies in improvements being made.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers now have high expectations of the most able pupils, particularly in English, mathematics and science. These pupils use ambitious vocabulary skilfully and accurately in their writing, confidently explain their reasoning in mathematics and have a very strong understanding of the areas they have covered in science. Improving outcomes for most-able pupils in the end of key stage assessments further confirm the progress that has been made in this area.
- However, there is still further work to do in subjects such as history and geography. At times, the work that pupils cover in their time in school is not logically sequenced and so does not build up their knowledge and deepen their

learning as well as it might. On occasions, activities that most-able pupils are asked to complete are overly simplistic. As a result, the curriculum for most-able pupils in particular is suitably broad but currently lacks consistent depth.

- My second line of enquiry looked at how well writing is taught in key stage 1. Over time, this is the area assessed by the end of key stage tests where pupils' attainment has been least secure, with results in 2017 being particularly disappointing.
- Following those results, you and your fellow leaders took decisive action. You reorganised how English is taught in key stage 1, placing greater emphasis on matching teaching more closely to pupils' needs and abilities and linking reading and writing effectively through using high-quality texts. Staff have had good access to a range of training opportunities, and also say that working with other local schools has helped to further develop their practice and improve their confidence. The changes that have been made have been successful overall, as can be seen in the good quality of pupils' written work and the strong improvement in outcomes at the end of Year 2.
- Progress is typically less secure for the lower ability pupils. At times, teachers have tried to encourage them to add greater complexity to their writing before they have been completely secure with some of the more basic aspects of writing. As a consequence, these pupils are still too prone to making errors, such as reversing letters, misspelling key common words or putting full stops and capital letters in the wrong places.
- My final line of enquiry considered how successful leaders have been in improving the rate of attendance, which had dropped to be below average by the end of 2018, while the level of persistent absence had risen to be above average.
- Leaders have adopted a supportive approach to improving attendance, looking to reward good attendance and identify any barriers that might be preventing pupils from being in school as often as they need to be. Any absences are swiftly followed up and parents of persistent absentees are invited into school to discuss ways in which attendance can be improved. Good attendance is rewarded and fines for poor attendance are used only as a last resort.
- The school's approach has proved very successful, and current attendance has risen to be in line with the national average for 2018, while persistent absence is now below last year's national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- less-able writers in key stage 1 are given sufficient time and support to fully secure key basic writing skills
- work to develop the school's curriculum continues, so that pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with sufficient depth of learning 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 Archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sefton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Neil Dixon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you and other school leaders, including the senior leadership team and the leaders responsible for English and for key stage 1. I held meetings with members of the school's governing body and a group of staff. I took into account the 29 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, along with free-text comments. I talked with a group of pupils about life at school and met with a different group of pupils from Years 5 and 6 to look at and discuss their work across the curriculum. You and other senior leaders joined me on visits to classes in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I looked at examples of pupils' work and a range of documentation covering different aspects of the school's work.