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Mr Haydn Boyle
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Dear Mr Boyle

Short inspection of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 2018, 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 October 2013.

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 created a school where pupils feel safe, happy and eager to learn. You aim to ensure that everyone in Our Lady's Catholic Primary School is highly valued, keeping the school's motto of 'loving, learning and reaching out to all' central to the work you do. Parents and carers, staff and governors are proud to belong to the school. This is testament to the very good relationships you have established. Typically, parents comment, 'We couldn't ask for a better school' and 100% of them would recommend it to others.

Pupils are also proud of their school and genuinely enjoy the experience of learning. This is shown in their good behaviour, their levels of concentration and their enthusiastic responses to explain their learning. Pupils told me that they especially value the staff who 'are really supportive' and 'don't give you the answer, but help you to work it out'.

Through rigorous monitoring and evaluation, you have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and have accurately identified areas for further development. You have used this information well and taken decisive action to address areas for improvement since the last inspection.

All staff have received additional training that has improved their questioning skills. They use these skills to assess pupils' understanding in lessons. Pupils are challenged to think deeply about their responses and to give reasons for their answers. For example, in mathematics, pupils try several different strategies to

solve mathematical problems and question each other on the accuracy of their calculations. They are required to explain which methods are most effective and efficient, which deepens their learning further.

You have ensured that teachers design tasks that encourage pupils to contribute their own ideas to their learning. This helps them to grow in confidence as they move through the school. As a result, pupils are equally adept when learning independently and when collaborating in groups. These improvements in the quality of teaching have had a positive impact on the progress that pupils make.

At the last inspection, you were also asked to improve the skills of leaders to use information about pupils' progress more effectively. Together with the assessment leader, you make sure that pupils' assessment information is analysed accurately. This is used to inform the regular pupil progress meetings. At these meetings, staff openly discuss which aspects of their practice are having the biggest impact on pupils' learning. Staff value the training and development opportunities which you have provided and several of them are undertaking a national qualification for school leadership. Your focus on developing the skills of other staff is starting to widen the reach of leadership across the school. However, in some subjects, assessment is not as thorough and leaders do not have enough information to know how well pupils are doing. You also agree that outcomes in writing could be even better and that some subjects in the wider curriculum are not taught in sufficient depth.

Your highly effective leadership is well supported by a talented group of governors and together you drive the school towards the shared vision you have established. Governors visit the school regularly and are well informed about the progress that the school is making. They provide effective challenge to you and other leaders. For example, they ask incisive questions about the impact of the pupil premium funding on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Governors are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities and fulfil these well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose. Governors regularly check the effectiveness of the school's work to keep pupils safe. They use their expert knowledge to ensure that safeguarding procedures are compliant. Appropriate statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children. Training for staff is regular and keeps everyone up to date. This means that staff know what to do should they identify any concerns.

Pupils are taught to understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online. This is done through the curriculum and in assemblies. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if they have a problem, and know it will be dealt with quickly. Pupils are well prepared to deal with any incidents.

School staff work closely with families, local church groups and external agencies to

support vulnerable pupils, including those whose attendance starts to fall behind. These very strong relationships help to remove barriers that may affect pupils' attendance and well-being.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I wanted to find out how effectively pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils. This is because the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils in 2017 appeared to be lower at the end of key stage 1 than for other pupils nationally. In the Year 6 tests, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in reading was less than the national average.
- There is a small number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group, which means that data must be treated with caution. However, you are not complacent and keep the progress of this group under scrutiny. You have identified in your plans for improvement that one barrier to learning is the slower development of oral language skills for some children. You have implemented a number of strategies to improve children's language development in early years. You have involved the school in a long-term research project with a university to help train early years staff to improve the language and social development of children. The work in children's 'learning journeys' confirms the positive results which you are beginning to see from this training.
- You have introduced imaginative ideas to support vulnerable pupils, including a sensory learning programme. You have found that the daily physical activities aid concentration and give pupils a positive start to the day. You explained that this not only supports pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, but has also improved attendance for disadvantaged pupils.
- The current systems you have in place to monitor pupils' progress mean that any pupil falling behind, including those who are disadvantaged, is quickly identified and given appropriate support to help them catch up. However, you do not stop there. You want to know which programmes enable pupils to make the most rapid progress. The leader for assessment carefully analyses all information and uses this to share good practice with staff. The school's own data shows the success of these measures. A higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils are making progress that is similar to that of other pupils.
- My second line of enquiry was focused on the actions that leaders have taken to secure improvements in the teaching and learning of reading and writing. The progress that pupils have made in these areas by the end of Year 6 has fluctuated for the last three years. Writing was better than national averages in 2015, but lower in 2016 and 2017. In reading, progress was significantly better than the national average in 2016, but the rate of progress slowed to be in line with the national average in 2017.
- You and other leaders have taken effective steps to improve consistency in pupils' outcomes in reading and writing. You invested in new reading resources, which your own analysis showed were better in supporting particular groups of pupils. Regular checks on the quality of teaching enable you to provide training to meet the professional needs of staff. You have ensured that assessment is

used accurately, so that work is well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils who are struggling are given extra help with reading and spelling and this accelerates their progress. The school's own data shows that these initiatives are having a positive impact and that progress has accelerated for all pupils in reading and writing since September. Standards of writing in pupils' books, although improving, are not as high as in mathematics and reading. This remains an area for improvement.

- Finally, I wanted to find out whether the curriculum offered by the school enables pupils to make progress in a wide range of subjects. This is because I was not able to find the information on the school's website about the full breadth of the curriculum.
- Leaders are proud of the rich variety of experiences that promote pupils' academic, personal and social skills well. Pupils' work shown in displays around the school and in their books is an apt record of how their learning about different cultures and respecting diversity is embedded, for example, through the work done with a festival for schools in developing pupils' drama skills and their understanding of Shakespeare. In music, all pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. Pupils make regular visits to the city learning centres to improve their understanding of technology. However, some areas of the curriculum are less well developed, including art, design technology and modern foreign languages. These are not taught in sufficient depth to enable pupils to make the progress they need to prepare them for the next stage of their education. In addition, the assessment and tracking system requires refinement to give leaders a more detailed overview about the progress that all pupils are making in a wider range of subjects across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- tracking data supports leaders to have an accurate view of the progress that pupils make across subjects and year groups
- they increase the opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills to greater depth in a wide range of subjects, including modern foreign languages, art, and design technology
- pupils' writing skills continue to improve to enable them to achieve as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.

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 Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Parkinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and some subject leaders. I met with the school's business manager and pastoral leader. I spoke with the school improvement partner, a representative from the archdiocese and the local authority. I met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I visited several classes with you to observe teaching and learning. Together with some teachers, I looked at pupils' work. I met with a group of pupils from the school council. I took account of the 49 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and evaluated 31 free-text responses from parents. I considered the seven responses from staff to the Ofsted online questionnaire and 13 responses from pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan. I viewed a range of information about pupils' attainment and progress. I scrutinised the safeguarding document and I undertook a review of the school's website.