

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



10 April 2017

Mrs Angela Hill
Headteacher
St Catherine's Catholic Primary School
Drovers Lane
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 9EL

Dear Mrs Hill

Short inspection of St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017, 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 November 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 successfully created a culture where everyone is valued and supported as a learner. One member of staff described the school to me as a 'complete family unit'. This is a view echoed by staff, pupils, governors and the majority of parents. You have ensured that St Catherine's continues to be a caring and inclusive school based on a strong Catholic ethos.

St Catherine's is at the heart of its community. Pupils, staff and parents value the kind and caring culture of the school. Relationships around the school are warm. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their learning. Staff appreciate the investment that you have made in them by providing high-quality professional development and support.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They behave well in lessons and around school. They are polite to each other and to adults alike. They listen courteously to each other's ideas in class. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils which support the purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. In all the classes I visited, pupils were keen to answer questions. They worked hard with focus and determination in even the most challenging of activities.

The governing body has a clear understanding of the strategic role it plays in the

leadership of the school. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They support and challenge leaders effectively. You have worked hard with governors and staff to identify the correct priorities for further improvement, and are taking the right actions to secure them. The new organisation of classes and the curriculum is already having an impact on pupils' work. While progress is mostly good, leaders know that there are some groups of pupils, in particular the most able in key stage 1, whose progress needs to improve further to ensure that they achieve the very best outcomes of which they are capable. You have also identified that the impact of phonics teaching could be further strengthened. Leaders have introduced new approaches to the teaching of phonics in school and this is already having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. They were keen to tell me that staff, both classroom-based staff and those who greet them in the school office, are welcoming and approachable. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that this is a supportive school that welcomes parents' views. One parent summarised the views of many by explaining, 'The school has excellent leadership, so you know if you have a problem, it will be dealt with at the highest level.'

At the previous inspection, the school's leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching in writing, including the writing pupils complete in other subjects. Recent results show that these issues have been successfully addressed. Standards in writing have improved markedly and are consistently around the national averages at key stage 2. Standards are similar to national averages at key stage 1. Attendance was also an area you were asked to improve by the inspector. Attendance is now just below the national average and you are working hard with your families to ensure that it reaches the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils feel safe at school and learn how to keep themselves safe. They told me about the work you are doing to help them stay safe online and how to stay safe outside school.

Staff have a good awareness of safeguarding issues and value the regular updates that you provide. Staff who are new to the school comment positively on the information they are provided with on induction. Staff are clear about the school's systems and what to do if they have any concerns about children's welfare. All the appropriate vetting checks are completed before a member of staff or volunteer starts working at the school. They are able to spot potential signs of abuse and know how to report any concerns they have. You keep detailed records relating to the safeguarding of pupils. Parents are on the whole very satisfied with how the school cares for their children.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on key lines of enquiry which we agreed. The first of these was looking at the quality of mathematics teaching across the school. You have embarked on a programme of significant improvement of the mathematics curriculum throughout the school. This far-reaching and ambitious development has been backed up by improvements to the way that leaders undertake checks on teaching quality. This process is now more in-depth than in the past and takes account of pupils' progress over time. Crucially, it is focused on the quality of teaching and its impact on learning, and how both can be improved. These changes are all having a positive impact on pupils' experience, confidence and outcomes in mathematics. Evidence in books and during lessons shows that pupils are completing more complex and challenging problem-solving activities and are making good progress as a result.
- Teachers have received well thought out and targeted professional development to improve the quality of provision for mathematics. They have embraced a new approach to teaching mathematics and are enthused by the revamped curriculum. Learning activities are routinely challenging for pupils of different abilities across the school now. In one year group, six children were given very challenging activities around solving problems of ratio and proportion. Due to excellent teaching and a well-structured lesson, children made significant gains in their learning.
- We also agreed to look at attendance across the school. Over recent years, pupils' attendance has not reached the national average. You have implemented a number of strategies to improve this situation. You check attendance information carefully every week and you communicate with parents when you are concerned. Rates of attendance are not yet in line with the national average but are improving slowly due to the highly effective actions taken by leaders.
- We also agreed to look at the quality of teaching across the school, in particular key stage 1. You rightly recognise that in the past, standards at the end of key stage 1 have not been high enough. You have taken action to improve teaching and raise expectations. In particular you have improved the level of challenge for the most able. As a result, the quality of teaching and levels of challenge are much improved. However, from a range of starting points, fewer children in key stage 1 achieve the very highest levels of attainment.
- Leaders and governors work closely together to consider the school's future direction and priorities for improvement. These are set out in policies and plans. However, improvement priorities are not always linked sharply enough to impact measures or interim checkpoints. Plans do not make clear the difference actions are intended to make, suitable timescales or how progress will be measured.
- Teaching across school is at least good with much that is outstanding. The induction for new staff is of the highest standard. Teachers new to the school receive excellent support and as such their teaching is of a very high standard in school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- attainment across key stage 1 improves further to ensure that all pupils reach the highest levels of which they are capable
- they improve the rigour of school development planning by ensuring that improvement priorities are linked to clear targets and impact measures.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Tonge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, a group of governors and staff. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I observed pupils around the school and in their classes. Together, we visited all the classes, observed teaching and learning, looked at books and spoke to pupils about their work. I also met with five pupils to seek their views of the school. I listened to three pupils read. I met parents in the playground at the start of the school day. I took account of the 26 responses to Parent View, including free text responses. There were no responses to the staff survey.