

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 January 2018

Mrs Alison Casey
Headteacher
Our Lady of Grace RC Primary School
Highfield Road
Prestwich
Manchester
M25 3AS

Dear Mrs Casey

Short inspection of Our Lady of Grace RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 December 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. Since you became headteacher in September 2014, you have provided strong leadership to create a caring community where everyone is valued and supported. You, along with your deputy headteacher and governors, have a clear focus on the development of the whole child.

The school's Catholic ethos shines through everything the school does. Pupils are encouraged to show respect and tolerance towards others through very close links with the local parish church and learning about different faiths and cultures. The inclusive culture of your school was exemplified by the Christmas assembly, when all Year 6 pupils sang joyfully together to their parents and grandparents.

As we toured the school, I saw many pupils who were happy and cheerful. I found pupils to be polite and well mannered. Pupils behave very well during breaktimes and lunchtimes. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to their teachers, take pride in their work and help their classmates. Pupils enjoy coming to school. As one pupil said, 'Teachers are very nice and help you.' The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of sports, including cricket and netball. Pupils are proud to represent their school in competitions, including for chess and football. Pupils develop good leadership skills in various roles, for example as eco-warriors, e-safety leaders and physical education champions.

Many parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said

that they would recommend the school to others. As one parent commented: 'It's a warm and friendly community. Teachers are very approachable and any concerns are dealt with quickly.'

Governors have a strong understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school. They receive regular, clear summaries of information so that they can challenge leaders effectively. You also receive useful advice and support from your school improvement adviser.

You have worked closely with your deputy headteacher to drive forward improvements in teaching and learning and the curriculum. You have provided effective training for staff on writing and mathematics. You and your staff are developing a good understanding of the barriers pupils face and are working hard to make sure pupils receive the support that they need. Your regular monitoring has allowed you to accurately identify the strengths in teaching and to act where necessary to improve areas of weakness. You hold teachers to account effectively for the achievement of their pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress across the school.

All of the staff who responded to the online survey said that they are proud to work in the school. One teacher commented: 'The children are wonderful. The school is like a family and we work well as a team.'

You have successfully overseen the completion of a high-quality early years building which provides a bright and colourful place for children to learn. Children get off to a strong start in the early years. Since the last inspection, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years foundation stage has been well above average. The teaching of phonics is a real strength of the school. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Subject leaders are passionate about the school and have regular opportunities to be involved in the direct observation of teaching in their area of responsibility. Adults articulate the correct sounds when linking letters and the sounds that they make. Marking clearly indicates to pupils how to improve their work. You have worked with teachers to ensure that they plan learning that matches pupils' levels of ability. However, you recognise that there is still some work to do to ensure that the most able pupils in key stage 2 are consistently challenged to achieve greater depth in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in school. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. For example, the single central record is well maintained and up to date. You have improved the security of the site and safety for pupils. Staff are particularly vigilant to spot any child who might be at risk from harm. Leaders work

effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and their families are well supported. A designated governor is responsible for health and safety and reports regularly to all governors about any issues that require attention. Pupils say that they feel safe. E-safety is well promoted. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They know who they can turn to if anything is worrying them.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Over recent years, too many of these pupils have not been attending school regularly. You have identified the different reasons why these pupils have a high absence rate and are working closely with parents to improve their children's attendance. Regular attendance is celebrated through rewards. You recognise that the attendance of some of these pupils needs to improve further.
- My line of enquiry relating to the progress of pupils in mathematics in key stage 2 matched your own concerns. You had already identified that pupils did not make enough progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 in 2017. You have put in place strategies to address this. Leaders are working with teachers to improve pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. A review of current assessment information and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that progress in mathematics is improving. However, you acknowledge that this remains an area for further development.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who attained the expected standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average. You have developed well-thought-out plans to address this. For example, there is now a greater focus on guided reading to help pupils to improve their comprehension skills. Pupils who read to me used their knowledge of phonics accurately to pronounce unfamiliar words. You have purchased more high-quality books that support pupils' ideas and imagination in readiness for writing. Pupils have opportunities to write for a purpose across different subjects. The increased use of practical equipment is helping pupils to solve mathematical problems more effectively. Leaders check closely on the progress of the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are identified quickly and given additional support. Provisional data in 2017, current assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work show strong improvements in reading, writing and mathematics.
- My scrutiny of pupils' work and my discussions with pupils in lessons indicate that most of the activities set by teachers are closely matched to the ability of pupils. However, you acknowledged that there is further work to do to ensure that the most able pupils in key stage 2 are challenged to achieve as well as they should.
- You have given writing a higher profile across the school. The revised curriculum has inspired pupils' excitement and enjoyment and given pupils opportunities to write at length. Teachers in the school and across the local authority check to make sure that teachers' assessments are accurate. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was

high. The unvalidated overall progress score for writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was higher than the national score and represents a significant improvement on the previous year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves so that it is at least in line with the national average
- progress in mathematics in key stage 2 improves further by building on pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills
- the most able pupils in key stage 2 are challenged to achieve the highest possible standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the attendance officer and a group of subject leaders. I met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I met formally with pupils and also spoke with other pupils during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 5 read. I scrutinised pupils' work across the school. Parents talked with me as they dropped their children off at school. In addition, I took account of 43 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 41 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 20 staff and 63 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies about keeping children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.