

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Anne Clinton
Headteacher
St Patrick's Roman Catholic Primary School
Livesey Street
Collyhurst
Manchester
M4 5HF

Dear Mrs Clinton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Patrick's Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 May 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- assess more accurately those pupils who find reading more difficult and help them to remember the sounds that they have learned
- improve the sequence of learning in writing in key stage 1
- develop the knowledge of leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics so that they can more thoroughly check the quality of learning in their subjects.

Context

After the last section 5 inspection, you appointed a temporary teacher in Year 5. This was to cover a maternity leave. The substantive teacher subsequently returned but has now been replaced by a new teacher. The local authority and the diocese have supported the reconstitution of the governing body. This has taken place because the school is now part of a hard federation with the nearby St Edmund's Roman Catholic Primary School. Furthermore, you have restructured the senior leadership team. This now supports both schools. Two governors have joined the governing body and two have left since the last inspection.

Main findings

Since the last section 5 inspection, you have remained determined to improve the effectiveness of the school. You have a suitable improvement plan in place to guide all involved in this aim. It has clear actions covering the areas for improvement left at the last inspection, including a clear focus on curriculum development. You have clear targets to check whether your work is making a difference.

You, supported by governors and staff, have taken appropriate action to improve all aspects of the school's work. You have identified that pupils have gaps in their subject knowledge because of the circumstances brought about by the pandemic. You and other leaders have successfully adapted the curriculum to address these gaps. Pupils are catching up well with their learning as a result.

You and other leaders have improved the mathematics curriculum for all pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have adopted a new scheme of work that sets out in sequence the knowledge that pupils will learn and when. You are focusing more keenly on developing pupils' confidence with numbers and their ability to reason about mathematics. Consequently, pupils now carry out calculations accurately and can explain clearly how they reach their answers. Teachers in early years give children work that makes them think hard. Pupils now know more and remember more than they used to do.

You and other leaders have continued with the new approach to teaching reading that you introduced after the last section 5 inspection. Teachers follow a more structured programme to teach phonics. Pupils in key stage 2 read high-quality texts linked to their learning in other subjects. Additionally, you have made sure that pupils get better at understanding what they read. Teachers focus on important aspects of reading, such as how to work out the meanings of words using knowledge of the text. This has resulted in pupils becoming more fluent readers. Staff begin to develop children's vocabulary as soon as they start in Nursery Year. Despite these improvements, a small number of pupils in key stage 1 who find reading hard do not use phonics in their reading as well as they should. This is because teachers have not made sure that these pupils know the sounds that they

have been learning securely. This means that these pupils are not becoming fluent or confident enough in reading.

In writing, you and other leaders have organised the knowledge that pupils need into a clearer order. Consequently, the quality of writing produced by pupils in key stage 2 is improving. For example, pupils write using increasingly complex sentences and choices of words. However, in key stage 1, there are some pupils who are not building their writing knowledge as effectively as possible. This is because they learn some aspects of writing in an unhelpful order. For example, in Year 1, pupils learn about writing full sentences before they understand what a noun is.

In subjects other than English and mathematics, subject leaders are improving their overview of the quality of education. Subjects such as art and geography have a structured curriculum in place. Assessment takes place at the end of each year. However, subject leaders do not currently use this assessment information to find out how well pupils are doing. This means that they are not assuring the quality of the curriculum in their subject as effectively as they should.

Pupils with SEND receive increasingly effective support. You and other leaders are ambitious for the same curriculum to be available to all pupils, including those with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator works effectively with staff to adapt the content of the curriculum to suit the needs of each of these pupils.

You provide a suitable range of activities and opportunities to support pupils' personal development. You have adapted some positions of responsibility for pupils because of the restrictions caused by COVID-19. For example, school prefects are now class monitors. This is to enable you to keep to the class 'bubbles' you have set up. You plan to return to organising a full range of sports clubs and activities out of school when the government's restrictions are no longer in place. Staff also encourage pupils to respect people's differences through lessons in personal, social and health education.

Pupils' behaviour is well managed. You have renamed playtime active time and increased the range of activities available for pupils. Staff lead effectively organised activities while they supervise the pupils. You have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils who spoke with me said that they do not miss out on learning because of disruption by other pupils in class. You have secured improved attendance. You work to reduce pupils' absence by a variety of means. For example, if a pupil is absent without explanation, staff make prompt telephone calls to parents and carers to find out why their child is not in school.

Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development in its progress towards becoming good. They hold leaders to account effectively. They ask searching questions about school improvement,

assessment and how well pupils are learning. Their work contributes well to the improvements in the quality of education that leaders are bringing about.

Additional support

The local authority has provided useful support that has contributed effectively to the improvements that you and other leaders have secured so far. For example, the adviser has helped with the improvements in the work of subject leaders. An external consultant has helped with the changes that you have made to the writing curriculum. You have used the advice from the diocese to help with the restructure of the governing body.

Shared work across the federation is having a positive impact on improvement in the education that the school provides. For instance, the subject leader for mathematics from St Edmund's now works across both schools. This has supported the improvement seen in mathematics since the previous inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders and other members of staff to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I held telephone conversations with representatives of the local authority and the diocese. I also held a virtual meeting with the chair and three other representatives of those responsible for governance. I met with two groups of pupils from key stage 2. I looked at a variety of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, curriculum plans and schemes of work, documents relating to safeguarding and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Accompanied by you and the deputy headteacher, I carried out a series of joint visits to classrooms in most year groups, including early years. I looked at a selection of pupils' work during these visits.

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 Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector