

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Anne Clinton
Executive Headteacher
St Patrick's RC Primary School
Livesey Street
Collyhurst
Manchester
M4 5HF

Dear Mrs Clinton

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

Following my visit to your school on 21 March 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. I would like to thank your deputy headteacher, Siobhan Rabbitt, for the help she gave me in your unavoidable absence. I would also like to thank her for the time she made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 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.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- further improve attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by end of Year 6 and Year 2
- ensure that teachers provide more consistent challenge in mathematics for the most able
- provide more opportunities for pupils in lower key stage 2 to demonstrate their writing skills unaided.

Evidence

During my visit I met with the deputy headteacher and the school's mathematics lead, who is a senior leader. I met with a group of four parents and carers who shared their views about the school. I also met with a group of pupils in key stage 2 and talked informally throughout the day with other pupils. I met with the local authority's quality assurance professional to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection, and the level of support provided. I also met with the local authority's senior officer and a representative of the diocese. I met with seven members of the governing body, including the chair. I examined a variety of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, assessment documentation, minutes of governing body meetings, documents connected with safeguarding and records of lesson observations and work scrutiny. Accompanied by the deputy headteacher and senior leader, I carried out a series of joint visits to classrooms to look at pupils' progress in English and mathematics. I also analysed a selection of pupils' books in Years 1 to 6.

Context

Since the last inspection, you appointed a temporary teacher in Year 5 to cover a maternity leave. The substantive teacher has now returned. 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.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders are improving the quality of teaching and learning and progress for pupils. Published assessment information for 2018 showed that progress improved in reading in Year 6. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined was slightly above the national average, which represents a considerable improvement on the previous year. Nevertheless, attainment in each of reading and writing was below the national average.

There has also been improvement in attainment in the early years and key stage 1. In 2018, a very large proportion of pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1. The number of children who achieved a good level of development in the early years was in line with the national average in 2018. These are improvements on pupils' performance in 2017. Although attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 also improved in 2018, it was still below the national average.

You have drawn up an action plan that focuses sharply on the key issues that were raised at the last inspection. The document makes it easy to measure success and you evaluate your progress regularly.

You took swift action to tackle an instance of underperformance in teaching. You have also put support in place for some teachers to help them to strengthen their practice.

Your positive actions have led to teachers now providing work that contains a greater degree of challenge for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in English and mathematics. However, this is inconsistent in mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. Where challenge is most evident, pupils regularly have the opportunity to attempt tasks that require them to think hard and to use their reasoning skills. For example, in Year 2, pupils analyse calculations in which the teacher has included deliberate mistakes. In Year 4, pupils grapple with problems that have more than one solution.

You are embedding and developing new approaches to teaching English and mathematics. You have analysed pupils' previous performance in these subjects and identified areas for particular attention. These include: a greater emphasis on pupils' ability to make inferences in reading; the development of more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills for themselves in extended pieces; and a sharper focus on pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics. The actions to improve these weaker aspects are having a positive effect on the progress of many pupils. However, in writing, although pupils in lower key stage 2 acquire knowledge of relevant genres and structures, they do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills independently.

You have taken effective action to improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. You have made breaktimes more interesting with a range of equipment to enable pupils to take part in physical activities which contribute to promoting their well-being. Pupils who spoke with me said that this action has improved behaviour and that they appreciate what leaders have done.

You have supported staff with the planning of lessons so that they give more attention to the support provided for pupils to ensure that they become confident when working unaided. This has greatly reduced pupils' dependence on adults' support, which existed previously.

There is now a variety of opportunities through, for example, lessons in personal, social and health education and religious education, to ensure that pupils have a better understanding of different cultures and beliefs. During my conversations with pupils, it was clear that they could explain, for example, the main features of Islam.

You are successfully developing the role of subject leaders. They benefit from regular training and have opportunities to observe effective practice in your partner school in the federation. These leaders now carry out regular checks on what is happening in their subject. They are more aware of what is needed to promote progress and discuss teachers' strengths and offer help when required. All subject

leaders with whom I spoke talked knowledgeably about standards in their subject and about their current action plans.

You have refined your systems for carrying out checks on the quality of teaching and learning. These take the form of lesson observations, the analysis of assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work. You give teachers feedback about their strengths and areas for development. You make sure that teachers address their development points. You help staff by providing appropriate training or support. These actions are contributing effectively to the overall picture of improvement that is emerging.

You have taken action to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) more effectively. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) now attends termly meetings to discuss pupils' progress, which enables earlier identification of pupils' needs. She also provides more advice to colleagues to ensure that pupils with SEND receive appropriate support.

You have worked with parents to improve pupils' attendance. There is now a system involving early contact with parents of pupils who have low attendance. There are also rewards each week for classes who have full attendance. Most recent attendance information shows that pupils' absence and persistent absence are reducing and are now close to or lower than average.

You are ensuring that teaching in the early years more fully meets children's needs, including the most able. You have provided support to staff to develop their planning. Teachers now provide specific, challenging tasks, including for the most able, so that children have opportunities to deepen their understanding of reading, writing and mathematics. For example, most-able children write lists of the items they will need to plant a seed. These actions have contributed effectively to children's improving progress in the early years.

Your safeguarding records are thorough and fit for purpose. Your required record of checks on members of staff is compliant and comprehensive.

I met with a group of key stage 2 pupils. They told me they feel safe in school and they know who to speak to if they have any worries. They said that there have been several improvements since the last inspection, such as the new activities at playtime, and teachers now challenge them more in their work.

Governors are clear about the school's priorities. They challenge you and your senior leaders rigorously. They ask probing questions about pupils' achievement and how you are making sure that you bring about the necessary improvements.

The small group of parents who spoke with me were very positive about the school. They say that progress for their children has improved since the last inspection and

they consider their children to be safe in school. This is consistent with the positive responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support to the school in order to raise standards. The positive impact of this is most evident in the improving picture of progress in reading in key stage 2 and in the improvement in performance in the early years and in phonics in Year 1. There are also signs of improvement in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, although this is stronger in key stage 2 than key stage 1.

Leaders have made effective use of an external consultant to support their work in improving pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. This support is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes.

The diocese has contributed effectively to the establishment of a new governing body for the newly formed federation. The governors provide strong challenge and support to school leaders.

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 website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector