

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Stella Groarke
Headteacher
St Peter's Catholic Primary School
Sandy Lane
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN4 5EP

Dear Mrs Groarke

Short inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team have created a friendly, nurturing school which is very much valued by parents and carers. Pupils enjoy school. They learn to get on well together, forming strong relationships with adults and with each other. One parent echoed the sentiments of many others who made their views known when they said, 'Our school is a warm and loving family that my children love and we are happy to be part of.'

At the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the effectiveness of leadership. You have worked with leaders to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve across key stages. Your leadership team are building a stronger curriculum to address the requirements of the national curriculum. Although there have been challenges, your leaders are now securing sustained improvements that are leading to better teaching and stronger progress for pupils.

Senior leaders share your vision and drive. They have an accurate view of the school's performance and have swiftly addressed areas for improvement. This was evident in the work the English subject leader has carried out to revitalise approaches to reading. Teachers are ensuring that pupils have access to quality texts and richer vocabulary.

You recognised that standards of assessment needed to improve to give teachers a better awareness of the standards expected of pupils. Your team has worked with local authority partners and neighbouring schools to develop an accurate view. As a result,

teachers can use assessment effectively to check pupils' progress and modify their teaching.

You have identified and addressed weaker teaching. As a result, teaching is now better across the school and pupils currently in the school are making much better progress. You have created an environment where teachers support and challenge each other to improve. Joint working with other schools and better training has improved teacher's subject knowledge and skills.

You have responded quickly to a recent increase in the number of children with English as an additional language joining the school. You sought expert support and guidance to ensure the effective inclusion of these children. Consequently, staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and understanding to enable all these children to access their learning successfully.

The previous inspection prioritised the need to improve the early years provision. Your team has remodelled the early years area which is exciting and encourages independence both indoors and outdoors. The environment focuses on developing the children's language and being able to communicate effectively. You have been quick to address assessment so that it is secure and can be relied upon to inform next steps. You have ensured that the teaching and learning for children with English as an additional language is informed and built on valuing all cultures and languages. For example, the Polish café role-play area prompted discussion between two children around the English and Polish word for carrot.

Local authority representatives know the school well and have worked closely with the school to provide challenge and raise standards. You and your staff have welcomed and responded positively to this challenge. Improvement partners have helped you to develop the capacity of leaders to embed and sustain these improvements.

Governors are committed to their roles and take an active interest in the school. The governing body knows the main strengths and weaknesses of the school because you share a wide range of information with them. Governors make good use of this information and regular visits to school to question your progress and actions towards achieving the school improvement plan.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Systems for recruitment and induction of new staff are robust. All staff are well trained and act quickly if they have any concerns about a pupil. You work closely with external agencies to ensure that families and pupils receive timely support when it is needed.

Pupils I spoke with told me they feel safe and that they are taught how to keep safe. The curriculum offers a range of opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to keep safe, including about online safety. Pupils say that bullying is rare but that adults listen to them and resolve any issues quickly and fairly if they arise.

Inspection findings

- You have focused rightly on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The positive effect of leaders on improving the teaching of mathematics is evident in the strong subject knowledge that teachers display. Pupils' work shows a range of opportunities for investigation and problem solving and is of a high standard. Pupils have the opportunity to practise, consolidate and be appropriately challenged at all levels. This was evident in mathematics lessons, where pupils independently move onto more challenging tasks when they feel ready.
- Teachers in the school use questioning effectively to encourage pupils to think more deeply and explain their understanding. This is particularly the case in reading. The English subject leader has recently implemented a new reading approach which is being used consistently across the school. The use of high-quality texts seen in all classes ensures that all pupils are exposed to a wider range of rich vocabulary. Pupils' work shows that this is already having a positive effect on improving the quality of their writing. Key stage 1 lessons show effective teaching of early comprehension skills and vocabulary development. However, I agree with leaders that basic reading skills need to be taught more consistently well in key stage 1 and early years.
- Improvements in the accuracy of assessment has led to teachers having a better understanding of their pupils' needs. Teachers are more accountable for the progress of their pupils. Pupils' work shows appropriate challenge for pupils at all ability levels and good progress over time.
- In the early years, children engage in their chosen activities and cooperate well with each other in their play. For example, children were seen independently practising their number formation. One child was having trouble writing a number '7' correctly, which led to the other child finding a number card, so she had something to copy from. The interaction of staff with the children appropriately challenges the children's experience and thinking. The language-rich environment successfully encourages a love of reading and the children can be seen using the reading areas to enjoy books. While many of these changes are gaining traction, they are not fully embedded and as a result the proportion of children reaching a good level of development remains below that seen nationally.
- You correctly identified the need to develop a rich curriculum that excites and captures pupils' imagination and is based on national curriculum requirements. Pupils' work in books and on display is of a high quality and covers all subjects. The work seen in pupils' books during the inspection demonstrates that children are learning a wide range of subjects and topics that relate to their own lives and experiences. Topics are selected to inspire pupils with themes and role models that interest them. For example, in Year 5, the pupils were inspired by the story of Malala Yousafzai and how a schoolchild like them has the power to effect change. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the visits and what they called 'wow' events and how they inspired their interest and motivation to find out more for themselves. Year 5 pupils spoke about their trip to Sherwood Pines to see the replica First World War trenches. They explained how this had enabled them to really visualise how it must have been for the soldiers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements made are embedded and sustained in the early years to increase the proportion of children who achieve good level of development
- basic reading skills are taught more consistently well so that pupils' progress in reading at key stage 1 and early years accelerates.

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

Yours sincerely

Beverley Riddle
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders as well as members of your governing body. I also met with two representatives from the local authority. I spoke informally with parents at the start of the day. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I looked at pupils' workbooks in detail and listened to pupils read. I also spoke to pupils during lessons and listened to their views of the school. I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation of its overall effectiveness. Additionally, I considered information relating to pupils' progress and safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children. I took account of 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the free-text messaging service. In addition, I took account of 19 responses to the staff survey and 38 responses to the pupil survey.