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Mr Michael Duxbury  
Headteacher  
St Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School, Blackburn  
Hawkins Street  
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Dear Mr Duxbury

### **Short inspection of St Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn**

Following my visit to the school on 29 June 2016, 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 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You, and all your staff, have high aspirations for pupils and are determined to give all pupils the best possible start to their education. Working together, you ensure that most pupils leave your school able to meet the challenges that lie ahead. The close-knit family and nurturing atmosphere that permeates the school is evident in relationships at all levels. You do not shy away from addressing shortcomings and any underperformance is tackled with vigour. For example, a new more structured approach has recently been introduced to the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), which is targeted at meeting the needs of individual groups of pupils, including the most able. Results have been impressive, and this year, 93% of pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check. This compares very favourably with the results nationally. Standards in writing have also improving. Pupils now have many more opportunities to write at length across a wide range of subjects.

You have the full backing and respect of your staff at all levels. Staff told me that they 'feel valued' and are 'very proud' to work at the school. Through your encouragement, support and approachability, teachers now feel empowered to climb the ladder and achieve well in their careers.

The school is well regarded in the local community and has developed a strong partnership with parents. As a headteacher, they consider you to be 'firm but fair' and really appreciate your presence in the school playground at the start and end of the school day. Parents are quite rightly proud of the good progress that their

children make. They find teachers very 'approachable' and 'very knowledgeable' about the children in their care.

The learning environment is stimulating and contributes significantly to pupils' enthusiasm to learn. Standards of behaviour in class, around the school and in the dinner hall are impeccable. Pupils are delightful and I felt very honoured when I was presented with a card welcoming me to the school.

Pupils were very eager to talk to me and tell me about their 'amazing' teachers. They spoke with pride about the money that the school council had raised to support the school they have international links with in Sierra Leone. Others told me about the wide range of out-of-school activities and competitive sports that your school provides for their enjoyment and good health. I was very impressed when pupils told me how much they enjoyed learning about different religions such as Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. Taking part in singing and dancing events at King George's Hall in Blackburn are memorable and special occasions that clearly mean a lot to pupils.

Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed well. With the support of external consultants, the outdoor play area in early years has greatly improved. The quality of teaching in the nursery and Reception classes are now typically good. We agree that this is reflected by the higher number of children achieving a good level of development from low and, at times, very low starting points.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that the safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and reflect the most up-to-date legislation. Staff have a good awareness of the indicators of abuse or neglect and procedures to follow should they be concerned about a pupil's welfare. All staff and governors have completed 'Prevent' training. As a result, they talk with some confidence about issues such as female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Designated staff who have responsibility for recruitment and safeguarding regularly complete training at the appropriate level. The school site is safe and secure. The identity of visitors is closely checked to ensure that children are kept free from harm.

### **Inspection findings**

- You lead with confidence, and by example, providing strong and effective leadership. Self-evaluation is accurate and you have a clear understanding of what your school does well and what it needs to do to improve further.
- You regularly monitor the quality of teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants are held to account. Their ongoing professional development is supported through an effective performance management system. However, we both agree that targets set for teachers relating to pupils' progress are not always sharp or measurable. As a result, the performance of teachers is not monitored as effectively as it could be.
- Most pupils in key stages 1 and 2 make consistently good progress and

achieve well. However, from looking at books, you and I are in agreement that, at times, the most able are not provided with work that consistently challenges and deepens their understanding.

- Pupils told me that learning is fun and I completely agree. For example, when touring the school we observed children in the Reception classes eagerly using their phonics knowledge to sound out words such as 'sand' and 'champ'. Others were developing their mathematical skills as they counted in tens and solved number problems. Moving through the school, we saw Year 1 pupils enthusiastically partitioning numbers and consolidating their understanding of 'doubles'. Older pupils became animated as they sang songs in French. They also used the French language confidently to describe vegetables they liked and disliked. Pupils in Year 6 worked well together to list five things that they could do with an umbrella other than protect themselves from the rain.
- You have done much to raise standards in reading, particularly for the most able pupils. The impact of this is now evident. Higher-ability pupils read to me with accuracy and fluency relative to their age. They talked with confidence about the types of books that they like to read. Pupils read regularly at home and with their class teacher. Good use is also made of the well-stocked library to help foster and develop further pupils' love of reading.
- You gave careful thought to the allocation of pupil premium money, additional funding from the government, to ensure that it is spent wisely to support disadvantaged pupils, academically, emotionally and socially. The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils shows an improving picture. However, we both agree that more work needs to be done to close the gap further between disadvantaged pupils, their classmates and others nationally. Due to a concerted effort by you and your staff, the attendance of this group of pupils is improving steadily.
- Taking into consideration their diverse needs, pupils who have special educational needs and or disabilities make good progress. This is due to effective teaching, timely interventions and close working relationships with outside agencies. Parents of these children were keen to tell me about the good progress that their children make and the high levels of support they receive from you and your staff.
- The website is a valuable resource for parents and contains a wealth of information about the curriculum that is being delivered across each year group. It is bright, colourful and easy to navigate. The website meets current requirements. You recognise the importance of checking it regularly to ensure that it remains so.
- You have close links with your local secondary school and good transition arrangements are in place to prepare children for the next stage of their education.
- Governors know your school well. They offer you good levels of support but are not afraid to challenge you when necessary. Safeguarding duties are taken seriously and the budget is monitored closely.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' performance management targets relating to the progress of pupils in their class are sharper and clearly measurable to allow leaders to monitor teachers' performance more effectively
- activities consistently challenge the most able pupils and deepen their understanding
- the gap continues to narrow between disadvantaged pupils, their classmates and others nationally.

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

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Iwaskow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection meetings were held with you and members of the governing body. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents, staff and pupils to seek their views of the school. A telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority was held. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by you and visited some classrooms to see the learning that was taking place. Examples of pupils' work were looked at and I listened to pupils read. I observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. A number of documents were reviewed, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation and records relating the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the responses to the online Ofsted questionnaires completed by parents, 25 staff and 168 pupils. The school's own questionnaire to parents and pupils were also considered