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Mr Gary Hayes  
Headteacher  
St James' Catholic Primary School Orrell  
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Dear Mr Hayes

### **Short inspection of St James' Catholic Primary School Orrell**

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 April 2012.

#### **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 built on the existing good relationships and created an environment where pupils learn well and feel welcome and happy. You have also sustained your high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. As a result, pupils across all year groups are making good progress and show excellent attitudes to their learning.

Parents are very supportive of you and your staff and a large majority gave positive responses in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They appreciated the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides. They described the school in highly complimentary terms, such as 'warm, friendly and caring', and said that their children feel 'safe and loved'.

Pupils show very good behaviour in their lessons, and their conduct around school is equally good. They show great interest in their learning, to the point where one year group gave a collective sigh of disappointment when the class teacher had to end the lesson to move on to the next activity.

You promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through a broad curriculum that is enhanced by a range of extra activities and experiences.

These range from sports, such as football and hockey, to gardening and musical clubs, such as the choir. You also encourage your pupils to make their own contributions to improving school life through the school council. They have, for example, introduced a 'buddy bench' on the playground, so that no pupils will feel lonely at breaktimes.

At your last inspection, your area for improvement was to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. While the school is not yet outstanding, teaching is effective and your pupils make good progress from their starting points because you carry out effective checks on the quality of teaching. Sometimes, however, in subjects other than English or mathematics, such as science, teachers limit opportunities for the most able pupils to make their own decisions about the structure and content of their written work.

We also agreed the following actions: adjusting the content of the school's website, so that it is compliant; ensuring leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics evaluate their actions more precisely; and making sure that recently appointed governors receive appropriate training as part of their induction.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You and your staff have secure knowledge about the signs of abuse and about how to report any concerns about a pupil, although safeguarding incidents are rare. Staff are also aware of risks, such as female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. The single central record of checks on staff is compliant and meets requirements.

You and your staff have created an environment in which pupils say they feel safe. They understand the different types of bullying that can occur, but they say incidents are rare and their teachers deal promptly and effectively with any issues that arise. A well-planned programme of activities, such as regular presentations on e-safety, make pupils aware of matters such as how to keep themselves safe on the internet.

### **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these revealed that you have addressed many of the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Your checks on the quality of teaching involve identifying strengths and suggesting actions that would make teaching even stronger. It was clear during the inspection that teachers have high expectations of pupils' work, and attitudes to learning and progress are strong. Consequently, teaching is effective. You have also provided opportunities for pupils to decide how to present their work. Sometimes, however, most-able pupils do not get the chance to make their own decisions about the content and structure of their writing because teachers limit the writing space they provide for them.

- The next two key lines of enquiry concerned the degree to which leaders had addressed diminishing the differences in progress between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally in key stage 2 and between boys and girls in key stage 1, especially in writing. You accurately identified these as focuses for your school improvement plan. The actions you have taken are having a positive effect and progress for these groups is good and improving. Effective actions include identifying these pupils more promptly and checking that interventions are successful. As a result, these pupils can use sophisticated language and advanced punctuation. For example, in Year 3, they can accurately use inverted commas to show speech.
- Pupils read well and show good comprehension skills for their abilities. Least-able pupils use phonics well to help them to read unfamiliar words. Most-able pupils convey the meaning of the text well with their expression and they are good at making inferences.
- We agreed that, in the next key line of enquiry, there was good evidence that governors and other school leaders had a secure understanding of most of their responsibilities. However, there were some omissions from the school's website that meant it did not comply with requirements. You and other leaders are now aware of this fact and you are taking action to make the necessary amendments. You have also undertaken to make sure that recently appointed governors receive appropriate training as part of their induction to the role.
- Governors and school leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, in subjects other than English and mathematics, leaders do not evaluate actions precisely enough to check on their impact on pupils' achievement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers provide opportunities for the most able pupils to make their own decisions on the structure and content of their writing, so as to deepen their understanding and stretch their skills
- the school's website complies with regulations and is regularly checked to make sure that it remains so
- leaders of subjects, other than English and mathematics, evaluate precisely the impact of their actions on pupils' achievement
- updated training is provided to recently appointed governors as soon as possible.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I carried out short visits to all year groups, including the early years, which were joint activities with you. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with members of staff, governors and pupils. I listened to pupils read and analysed pupils' work. I evaluated 75 responses received through Parent View and three responses received through the online staff survey. There were no other survey responses.