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Mrs C Beswick  
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School  
Old Chapel Street  
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Stockport  
Cheshire  
SK3 9HX

Dear Mrs Beswick

### **Short inspection of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 February 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your chair of governors says that the headteacher is relentless in her quest for progress and improvement and her desire to provide the best for the children. This sums up your leadership of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School. Your staff, and the parents that I spoke to during the inspection, share this sentiment.

You receive support from a dedicated, experienced and skilful governing body. Governors are a visible presence in your school. They work closely with subject leaders, meet with parents at open evenings and talk regularly with pupils. As a result of this approach, they have a clear understanding of the quality of education at the school. They offer effective support and challenge to leaders where it is required.

The pupils are well mannered and friendly. They say that they are proud of their school and demonstrate commendable views on diversity. In class, pupils display very good attitudes to learning. They work well together and settle to tasks quickly.

The parents that I spoke to had only positive comments to make about the school. Parents were pleased that you know all pupils by name and that nothing was too much trouble for members of staff.

In the previous inspection, the inspectors reported that the best teaching should be used as a model in all lessons. You have dealt with this issue very effectively. Teachers receive a broad range of training opportunities to develop further their understanding of subjects and the expectations for each group of pupils. Individual skills within your team are shared very effectively so that all members of staff understand what outstanding teaching looks like. As a result, the proportion of outstanding teaching in your school has increased.

The previous inspectors also noted that leaders and teachers must make sure that work in mathematics always brings out the very best in pupils. You addressed this issue quickly and successfully. Together with your mathematics leader, you implemented a new planning tool which ensures that all groups of pupils are given appropriate challenges. This tool also supports teachers and pupils in assessing their performance before and after each block of learning. You have also provided opportunities for pupils to learn mathematics using online resources and celebrate achievement in assemblies through your 'golden certificates'. Your mathematics leader has worked effectively with other members of staff to share good practice and offer focused support. This has been successful. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is now high. In 2017, provisional results showed that the progress of pupils in Year 6 is well above average. Their performance at both the expected and higher levels in mathematics is significantly higher than the national average.

We discussed areas where further work is required to support your school improvement. Levels of persistent absence remain stubbornly high despite your efforts to reduce them. Also, while overall performance of pupils by the end of key stage 2 is much higher than that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, this is not the case for some of the most able disadvantaged pupils at key stage 1. You are aware of these issues and are working very effectively with other leaders to remedy them.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. As designated safeguarding leader, you make sure that all records are of an exceptionally high standard and that safeguarding arrangements are thorough. Your school site is safe and secure. You ensure that the identity of visitors is closely checked. Governors and staff receive regular and detailed training to ensure that they have a thorough and up-to-date understanding of safeguarding issues. You complete an annual audit of safeguarding arrangements and they are fully compliant with statutory requirements.

Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school is a safe and very happy place. A typical response, expressed by one parent, was: 'There is a wonderful atmosphere in the school. One of the most impressive things is the excellent behaviour of the children.'

## Inspection findings

- You and your leaders know the school exceptionally well. My visit did not uncover anything that you had not already highlighted in your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. You have a clear and accurate vision of your school's development in the future.
- You are aware that, in recent years, the attendance of some groups of pupils has been too low. You work very effectively with outside agencies to offer support to families of pupils with low attendance. This enables these families to gain much-needed support and advice. Teachers create a welcoming environment and believe that regular praise encourages pupils to attend school regularly. Classes are given attendance awards and rewards as an incentive. You run a breakfast club to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. As a consequence, the attendance of many pupils has increased considerably. Nevertheless, overall persistent absence rates remain stubbornly high.
- You are justly proud of the level of achievement your pupils reach by the time they leave school. Your most-recent published results are no exception. They show that your pupils achieve at a level which is well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. You identified quickly that the most able mathematicians in key stage 1 were not always achieving the levels that they were capable of. This was dealt with immediately. You have worked with your senior leadership team and subject leaders to ensure that your assessment and tracking systems identify the progress of all groups. You provide teachers and teaching assistants with a broad range of training and regular opportunities for staff to share good practice and learn from each other. Your efforts have been successful. In 2017, provisional results showed that the performance of the most able pupils in mathematics increased and is now in line with the national average at key stage 1.
- Your chair of governors says that subject leaders have a commendable unity of purpose. I agree with this view. Subject leaders have worked exceptionally hard to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the support they require to reach their full potential. They are, however, aware that the most able disadvantaged pupils at key stage 1 have the potential to make more progress. Teachers undertake early assessments in the Reception class to identify any specific weaknesses and highlight ways in which teachers and parents can best support the children. Disadvantaged pupils receive additional support to ensure that any gaps in their learning are closed. You have provided training for teachers and teaching assistants to make sure that they are fully equipped to meet the needs of these pupils. Teachers organise workshops for parents to enable them to support their children better at home. One subject leader noted: 'We don't accept disadvantage as an excuse for low performance.' This belief has led to tremendous success. The 2017 provisional results at key stage 2 show that, by the time disadvantaged pupils leave your school, their performance is significantly higher than that of other pupils nationally at both the expected and higher standard in reading and mathematics. Their performance is in line with the national average in writing.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school is reduced to a level at least in line with the national average
- the most able disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 are consistently challenged so that a greater proportion make rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and subject leaders. I also met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I had informal discussions with parents and a group of pupils to seek their views on the school. Finally, I met with teachers and teaching assistants.

I visited all classes in the school with you and your deputy headteacher and scrutinised examples of pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school.

I reviewed a number of documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff, the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, assessment information, behaviour logs and attendance records. I also took account of nine responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 67 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I considered information posted on the school's website.

The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.