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Miss Patricia Coulthard
Headteacher
St Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, Mawdesley
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Dear Miss Coulthard

Short inspection of St Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, Mawdesley

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 2018, 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have preserved the welcoming and caring ethos within the school throughout a period of difficulty. Governors have supported you well to unite and empower staff to drive improvements in the school. Staff are positive about the school and morale is high. They greet pupils with warmth into bright, organised classrooms. Staff act as excellent role models for pupils. As a result, pupils are unwaveringly polite. They have a positive attitude towards all aspects of school life. Typical comments made by parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, focus on the 'professional but also caring and sensitive' approach of staff. Parents are positive about the school and the supportive culture that you have established.

There is no doubt among leaders and governors that, since the last inspection, the path taken by the school has been a rocky one. You have made the best use of professional development opportunities provided by the local authority to improve teaching and learning. Governors have also sought support from the local authority whose help has been central to the school's recovery. Governors have brought energy and drive to rapidly improve the quality of governance. However, you are under no illusions that there is further work to be done. Governors' checks on pupils' progress are limited and as such they do not fully hold you to account for the progress of pupils in each year group. Despite this, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have renewed the school's Christian vision to place pupils at the heart of school improvement.

You have ensured that the areas for improvement left at the previous inspection have been addressed effectively. The quality of teaching and learning has been improved to become consistently good. Staff have received training and development on how to provide pupils with effective feedback on how to improve their work. The Year 5 and Year 6 pupils that I spoke to value the opportunities that they have to discuss their learning with staff.

You have ensured that pupils have more opportunities to read. The evidence I gathered as part of this inspection shows that pupils make good progress in writing, and particularly in reading. However, pupils' written work shows that some of the most able pupils are not challenged to achieve the highest standards in writing.

Your plans to improve the school are much clearer. They describe the impact that actions should have on the improving the quality of education in the school. Although there is strength in the leadership of a number of subjects, the recent changes in staff have stalled the development of leadership in some subjects such as geography.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils say that they feel safe because of the care provided by staff. Pupils feel that they can share concerns with any adult in the school. There are excellent relationships between pupils and staff and between pupils themselves. This is because staff engender a culture of care that runs throughout the whole school so that pupils look after each other.

Pupils have an extensive understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online, because of the effective teaching that they have received.

Staff understand the potential areas of risk facing pupils. They have received appropriate training and remain vigilant, despite very few concerns about pupils. Records are detailed and are kept securely.

Inspection findings

- The first key line of enquiry for this inspection was to see how effectively leaders ensure that pupils are challenged to make good progress in reading and writing in key stage 1 and key stage 2. The English leader has introduced a new approach to support pupils' vocabulary and spelling development. This has not only improved pupils' enthusiasm but has enabled them to read with greater speed and understanding. In three of the last four years, 100% of pupils have met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils in Year 2 progress to use their skills confidently to decode words quickly so that they read fluently. Older pupils use their skills to retrieve information from non-fiction texts with ease. Pupils are excited about reading because they have opportunities to read interesting texts that 'take [them] to another world'. Pupils make very strong progress in their reading across the

school. The provisional data for the end of key stage 2 in 2018 indicates high attainment of pupils, many of whom exceed the expected standards for their age.

- Pupils' written work across the school shows that they make good progress. Leaders have ensured that there is a much more consistent focus on developing pupils' language. Staff have a better understanding of the standards that are expected for different age groups because of the training that they have received. This has been effective in ensuring that teachers help pupils to understand what they are learning and how they can improve their work. As a result, pupils choose words deliberately for effect when refining their work. However, although progress in writing is good, some of the most able pupils are not challenged well enough to achieve the highest standards in writing in key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Another key line of enquiry for this inspection was to see how effectively the school promotes pupils' development in geography. Leaders have designed the curriculum alongside staff to ensure that there is good coverage of the national curriculum. The pupils I spoke to in Years 5 and 6 had a good recall of the facts learned in previous years, for example when recalling their knowledge about mountains and volcanoes. Where geography is a main topic, the work in pupils' books shows a good development of pupils' knowledge. For example, in Year 1 pupils describe the water cycle and use their knowledge to produce weather forecasts. Although the leadership of geography has been affected by staffing changes, there has been a lack of focus on development of pupils' skills. However, the new leader has accurately prioritised the further development of pupils' skills in geography to match the knowledge-rich curriculum.
- The final key line of enquiry was to see how effectively staff challenge children to achieve beyond the early learning goals in writing and mathematics in the early years. The whole-school focus on improving children's word recognition and spelling has ensured that pupils and children are challenged to progress well in their written work. Children's files and workbooks show that phonics is highly structured to ensure that children make swift progress from writing words to writing simple sentences in a short space of time. In mathematics, children progress well because they have opportunities to consolidate their early learning before moving on to more challenging content. In 2018, results at the end of the Reception Year show that there has been an increase in the proportions of children achieving the highest standards in both writing and mathematics. There is a convincing range of work in children's books to show that they progress well in these areas.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors hold leaders to account by monitoring more closely the progress of pupils in all year groups
- pupils have further opportunities to develop their geographical skills
- there is greater challenge for some of the most able pupils in writing so that more achieve the highest standards at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. We visited classes together and spoke to pupils informally about their work during lessons. I heard pupils from Years 2, 4 and 6 read and also listened to pupils read as part of their classroom activities. I reviewed documentation about behaviour and safeguarding, which included the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I spoke with pupils about safeguarding, behaviour and different aspects of their mathematics work. I conducted a scrutiny of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils' written work and their geography work. I analysed leaders' records of the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I took into account 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and four responses to the staff survey.