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Mrs Julie McDonald
St Osmund and Andrew's RC Primary School
Falkirk Drive
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Dear Mrs McDonald

Short inspection of St Osmund and Andrew's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 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 October 2011.

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 the deputy headteacher are rigorous in your approach to improving teaching and learning and holding staff to account. You have the support and confidence of other leaders, all of whom have benefited from recent training and who now fulfil their roles well. The staff work together closely as a team, wholly focused on helping pupils to do well, academically and personally. They prepare pupils well for their future.

Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the school. They say their children are safe, happy and well cared for. Your school is a happy place where staff and pupils thrive. The enthusiasm of the pupils and the staff shines through in everything it does. Parents and pupils say the school is being 'one big family' where everyone looks out for everyone else.

The previous inspection report identified areas for improvement to raise pupils' attainment further. You have improved teaching with a stronger focus on assessment. When we visited lessons and looked at pupils' books, it became clear that: teachers plan work in response to how well pupils are doing; they focus on the knowledge and skills pupils need to demonstrate to show progress.

The previous inspection report also asked the school to improve pupils' progress in mathematics. This has been done. The emphasis now placed on encouraging pupils to investigate, research, discuss and solve problems has sharpened pupils' thinking and reasoning skills and led to higher standards in mathematics.

You were also asked to reduce the number of persistent absences at the previous inspection. Although still too high, persistence absence is lower than at that time. It relates to a very small number of families now. You are clearly doing everything possible to improve the situation, including involving, for example, the local authority and social services, when necessary.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are met and fit for purpose. Safeguarding is an integral part of school life and staff and governors have completed relevant training. Recruiting and vetting procedures are thorough, as are risk assessments and the attention given to health and safety. Pupils echo the views of their parents when they say they feel very safe in school and staff teach them how to stay safe. You give e-safety high priority. You make sure parents understand the school's approach to safeguarding and are well informed about how to keep their children safe when online.

We discussed the level of support you provide for pupils who find it difficult to learn, for whatever reason. You and the staff do much to help these pupils achieve well. Pupils understand that by caring and supporting each other, they make the school a safe and happy place for everyone. They are very proud of their role in doing so, saying, for example, 'it takes the pressure off staff'. They talk about staff giving a great deal of their own time to help them, and that, by carrying out responsibilities well, pupils can 'give something back'.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to look at how well the improvements in outcomes for the early years and phonics in Year 1 were being used to raise standards in Year 2. In Year 2, pupils' books show that writing, including spelling, has improved, not least because the teaching of phonics has improved and pupils use their phonics skills well to help them read and write. Although still hesitant at times, the pupils who read to me had good reading skills and, when questioned, showed that their comprehension skills are growing. They readily talk about what they have read and they clearly enjoy reading.
- You asked if I could take a closer look at the early years to ensure that the improvement there was continuing, and it is. In this age group, all activities have a clear learning purpose. Adults interact well with children, leading learning without stifling children's own interests and curiosity. This was noted as children worked out how to get a vehicle up a ramp, when they learned how to read the large numbers on doors and to work out one more or one less than a given number. Some of the writing I saw was impressive, with children using their phonics skills to help them spell and writing in sentences with correct punctuation. They were eager to read what they had written.
- My second line of enquiry was to investigate why so few pupils reached higher levels in the national tests last year and whether teachers' expectations of the most able pupils were high enough, particularly in reading and writing. You had

identified this yourself and made it a priority in the school improvement plan. When we visited lessons and looked at pupils' books, I could see that more is now expected of the most able pupils and standards are higher than in the past. This too is the result of the increased focus on using assessment information in class and in planning. Pupils show greater consistency in using their writing skills well in English and in other subjects and staff constantly remind them to do so. Discussions with pupils revealed that they enjoy reading, use the library and know a reasonable range of authors and the style in which they write. You are using your tracking systems well to improve pupils' progress but, as you rightly say, there is more work to do to ensure that pupils learn in greater depth and at the higher levels.

- My third line of enquiry centred on how well you support disadvantaged pupils with reading. Teachers accurately identify which pupils need additional support. When I heard some of these pupils read, I found that, although they could read every word, and had a range of techniques to help them read new words, they did not always understand what the words meant. Therefore, they could not always answer questions about the text correctly. You have put a support programme in place to improve the range of pupils' vocabulary. Improvements are beginning to emerge but more time is needed for them to become fully established.
- My fourth line of enquiry was to investigate whether the aspects of personal development judged outstanding at the previous inspection were still outstanding. I found this aspect is a major strength of the school. It underpins everything. The pupils' excellent attitudes were summed up in the extremely positive comments they made about how much the staff do for them and how important they feel it is to give something back. Whether involved in chaplaincy, peer mediation, helping others find friends, resolving conflict or helping younger pupils read, pupils display the same enthusiasm to become valued members of their school community and, ultimately, of society. Pupils display high levels of respect for adults and each other. They readily explain why it is important to treat others equally. They have a good understanding of British values.
- My fifth and sixth lines of enquiry were to do with safeguarding and attendance. I have explained safeguarding and my findings on persistent absence earlier in this letter. You clearly check attendance figures meticulously, and pursue absence rigorously where there is the least cause for concern.
- My final line of enquiry was to find out whether subjects other than English, mathematics and science are taught well enough. This is a national priority. You have made an excellent start on the new curriculum, planning it well to ensure that all subjects are given due attention. Teachers focus on developing pupils' skills and knowledge progressively in each subject. The curriculum adds to pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for learning. Pupils talk about learning being 'interactive' in that there is much practical work and pupils have a say in some of what they learn. They say: 'You don't realise you are learning ... it's amazing how much you learn in a day, a term ...' Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to pursue their own interests or lines of enquiry, albeit with guidance, so that they make progress. They regularly assess pupils' progress in each subject and use the information to close any emerging gaps in learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils achieve greater depth in learning and more of the most able pupils reach the higher levels in reading and writing, by embedding the procedures to improve pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher throughout the day. We talked about the improvements that had been made since the previous inspection, including since you arrived at the school two years ago. I also considered your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I examined all safeguarding records, including those relating to attendance, and explored your recruitment and vetting procedures. I held a discussion with five middle leaders and met with two governors and a representative of the local authority. Together, you and I visited a range of English and mathematics lessons and sampled books as we did so. I held a formal discussion with around 12 pupils and talked to many others informally in the playground. I also listened to pupils read, formally in Years 1, 5 and 6 and informally in other year groups as I observed them learning in lessons. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) but I met with around 20 parents at the start of the school day to ascertain their views and I considered the responses parents made to the school's own questionnaire. I also considered the four responses to the staff questionnaire.