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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Janice Taberner
Headteacher
St Benedict's Catholic Primary School Hindley
Abbott Street
Hindley
Wigan
Lancashire
WN2 3DG

Dear Mrs Taberner

Short inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School Hindley

Following my visit to the school on 15 February 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 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 provide strong and effective leadership and have set a clear vision that has contributed to improving the school. You have continued to cultivate a school in which children are happy, parents are supportive and to which staff are proud to belong. Your passion and drive for providing pupils with memorable learning experiences is clear. Staff, governors and parents have confidence and trust in your leadership. You and your senior leaders have instilled a strong sense of teamwork among staff and established high expectations for the pupils; together you ensure that there is a strong focus on achieving the very best for them.

During this inspection, we discussed your processes for evaluating the school's effectiveness. You have a comprehensive and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses which you use when planning improvements. You recognised that in 2016, middle-attaining pupils did not make enough progress and you have taken prompt action to ensure that this group now receive appropriate challenge, in key stages 1 and 2. You recognise that there is more to be done to ensure that careful checks are kept on the progress, from respective starting points, of all groups of pupils.

Your pupils are polite and respectful. They are excellent ambassadors for the school;

they receive compliments whenever they are out on visits. Pupils willingly take on a wide range of responsibilities offered to them, such as being prefects, digital leaders or members of the school council. Their behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They listen attentively to their teachers and work with maturity during lessons. In discussions, they express their views clearly and listen carefully to each other's ideas. The older pupils look after the younger pupils and encourage them. Pupils say their school is a big family: 'It doesn't matter what colour or religion we are, we are all the same. What matters is that we are nice to one another.' Almost all parents who spoke to me or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire were very positive about the school and would recommend it to others. One parent's comment echoed that of others: 'This is a great school, my child loves coming to school every day.'

Governors share your dedication and zeal. They are rightly proud of the school and understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They carry out their duty with thoughtful scrutiny. They check the accuracy of the information provided in reports through meetings with school leaders and by observing pupils at work. Consequently they provide effective support and challenge to the school.

You have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. Pupils of different abilities are now provided with learning tasks that are well matched to their needs and are given opportunities to work independently to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. There is good guidance for pupils about how to improve their work. Pupils now understand the feedback systems that their teachers provide.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping children safe is a priority at this school. You, senior leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that appropriate checks are made when staff are recruited. Safeguarding is recognised as everyone's responsibility. Staff and governors receive regular and up-to-date training in child protection to deepen their awareness and understanding of keeping children safe. Staff are vigilant and sensitive to signs of abuse and neglect. Record keeping is precise and staff communicate concerns promptly. Consequently, nothing is left to chance when it comes to pupils' safety and well-being.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The pupils spoken to were very clear about what to do to minimise risk in school, when online and outside. Pupils say they feel safe in school. Most parents also agree that you and the staff keep their children safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- Your school self-evaluation is accurate and provides a clear picture of the school's many strengths and the areas for development. You have correctly identified key priorities for improvement and have planned actions to develop each of these areas. Your comprehensive school improvement plan has been formulated with

the involvement of senior leaders and governors and is regularly reviewed to measure progress towards its objectives.

- You and your teachers work closely with other schools locally and you lead the local school improvement consortium. You have developed strong leadership across your school team, accessing and sharing innovative practice.
- Together with other school leaders, you have designed and implemented an exciting curriculum. This is taught through a combination of themes and individual subject teaching to ensure that meaningful learning takes place with a focus on the application of skills and memorable learning experiences. The pupils spoke enthusiastically about the special 'topic weeks' where they learn specific skills and knowledge in greater depth, through a themed approach. This week was art and music week and Year 6 were using oil pastels to create 'pop art' as they studied the music of The Beatles and the art of Andy Warhol.
- Mathematics is a focus for school improvement. You are concentrating on the development of reasoning and problem-solving. In lessons, we observed pupils estimating, investigating, representing findings and explaining their conclusions. Although this development is new, it is beginning to show a positive impact. This focus needs to be maintained to ensure good outcomes in pupils' mathematical skills and understanding.
- Teaching in early years has seen notable improvements since the previous inspection. Consequently, the number of pupils meeting the good level of development at the end of Reception Year has risen significantly over the past three years and is now above the national average. Activities which children choose for themselves are well planned and focus on providing children with good opportunities to reinforce and extend their learning across all curriculum areas. We observed a group of children in Reception, engrossed in a fishing activity that supported their mathematical development. One pupil explained: 'You use the net to catch two eggs and then add together the spots.'
- In 2016, overall results at key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were in line with the national figure. However, middle-ability pupils did not perform as well as their peers nationally, particularly in attaining the higher levels. You have correctly identified this group as underperforming and have ensured that your tracking is focused on the progress of this group of pupils. Teachers are ensuring a greater focus on this group so they are both challenged and supported to make rapid progress. Current data shows an increase in the number of middle-attaining pupils on track to attain the higher level in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attendance overall is in line with the national average but has been significantly below this level for disadvantaged pupils for the past two years. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is now improving. Leaders track punctuality and attendance very thoroughly. You and your recently appointed pastoral leader know your families well. You provide a balance of challenge and support to parents and pupils to ensure attendance continues to improve.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because of the wide range of strategies provided to support their learning. Leaders and teachers monitor progress and attainment for individual disadvantaged pupils and provide appropriate

programmes to support every child. You spend the money appropriately, ensuring it addresses the barriers to learning you have identified. Governors are aware of how pupil premium funding is spent and its impact on pupils' outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- checks are made on the progress of different ability groups, so that middle-ability pupils consistently perform as well as they can
- mathematical reasoning and problem-solving continue to be developed to raise standards in mathematics.

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

Aleksandra Hartshorne
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I met with you, your deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and the leader for English to discuss the impact of actions you are taking to raise standards across the school.
- You accompanied me on a visit to each class, where we observed the teaching of mathematics, and looked at some work in pupils' books.
- I met with four governors including the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body, and with a representative of the local authority.
- I spoke with a group of pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 and took account of 55 responses to the pupil online survey.
- I spoke with several parents at the start of the day and took account of 37 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- I reviewed 33 responses made by staff to the online survey.
- I considered your school website, your self-evaluation report, your school improvement plan and information about the achievement of current pupils. I also reviewed some pupils' workbooks from different year groups.
- I considered the school's safeguarding arrangements including the checks made on adults who work at the school.