

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 July 2017

Mr Mark FitzGibbon
Headteacher
Alston Lane Catholic Primary School, Longridge
Preston Road
Longridge
Preston
Lancashire
PR3 3BJ

Dear Mr Mark FitzGibbon

Short inspection of Alston Lane Catholic Primary School, Longridge

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and the senior leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have driven considerable improvement over recent years. You have achieved this because you and your team are very capable leaders. You are able to evaluate precisely how well all aspects of your school are performing and you are passionate about providing the very best for the pupils that attend Alston Lane. The senior leadership team members know how to support staff in improving their work and provide all staff with good-quality training.

When at school, pupils are happy and feel secure. They really enjoy attending every day. The school's strong Catholic ethos and the active promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development ensure that pupils become thoughtful, kind and considerate. Pupils' behaviour around the school is excellent. They look out for each other, are calm and at breaktimes they play enthusiastically. They love learning too. This is because teachers make lessons interesting. Pupils know that they are learning well and they value their education. In class, pupils work enthusiastically. Pupils' understanding of people from different cultural, social and religious backgrounds from their own is not as strong as it could be.

Pupils' achievement improved considerably in key stage 2 last year. This improvement has been consolidated, and pupils currently in key stage 2 are all achieving very well. A smaller proportion than seen nationally attain the highest standards because the most able pupils are not being pushed quite far enough

while in Reception or in Year 1.

Governors are also dedicated to achieving the very best for their community. They are well equipped to challenge you on the effectiveness of the running of the school and on pupils' achievements. Governors offer great support to you and your staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

The caring ethos that pervades the school and the trust that pupils have in staff ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils are entirely confident in discussing any concerns that they have with adults in the school. Staff are well trained in how to identify signs of possible neglect or abuse. They know whom to turn to for guidance. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. On occasion, when the need has arisen, leaders have made efficient and professional contact with external agencies that have further responsibility for promoting children's safeguarding. School leaders have worked well in partnership with these agencies.

Rigorous systems are in place to ensure that all those who work in the school, including volunteers, are suitable to work with children.

Inspection findings

- You and other senior leaders have been highly successful in improving the quality of teaching throughout the school, but most particularly in Years 2 to 6. Consequently, rates of progress that pupils made in key stage 2 improved considerably in 2016, particularly in writing and mathematics. This year, the teaching of reading is improving quickly.
- An extensive range of successful developments has led to these improvements. Teachers constantly review how well pupils understand new ideas or adopt new skills. Pupils have been taught how to review the quality of their work. This enables teachers and pupils to identify any misunderstandings quickly. These are rectified the following day during 'fix it time'. An earlier start to the school day gives teaching assistants opportunities to work with individual pupils, helping pupils to fill in any gaps in their understanding. As this identification of need is happening daily, pupils have only small issues with their learning to resolve, making it unlikely that they fall behind. Your expression, 'making sure pupils are keeping up, not catching up', sums up this approach perfectly.
- Senior leaders have a very clear understanding of how pupils at Alston Lane learn best. They are able to give teachers and teaching assistants very clear guidance on how to ensure that pupils learn effectively and cover the required curriculum. Consequently, methods and strategies are used consistently across the school. Teachers from Year 2 to Year 6 have very high expectations of what their pupils can achieve and are successful in helping pupils to progress very well. Senior leaders and teachers consistently review how effective teaching is. If improvements are needed, they implement them.
- The improvements implemented throughout 2016 and refinements applied

throughout 2017 have ensured that pupils currently in key stage 2 have continued to learn well. Greater proportions of pupils than seen nationally are reaching expected standards across all subjects. However, these improvements have yet to have the same impact on pupils' learning in Year 1. Nevertheless, pupils in these classes generally achieve as well as their peers nationally.

- Your accurate evaluations of the performance of the school have identified that too few pupils really excel and many have the potential to do so. These most-able pupils are not being pushed in Reception or Year 1 to achieve the very highest standards. This is having an impact on their attainment throughout the school. Unsurprisingly, you have begun to address this and you are confident that the progress of all groups of younger pupils will accelerate.
- You are rightly proud of the achievements of disadvantaged pupils throughout the school. Teachers and teaching assistants pay them particular attention and have been able to support them so that they achieve as well as others in the school and nationally. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also progress well.
- The rest of the curriculum is well taught, and pupils make strong progress. You have ensured that teachers cover all the aspects required of them through lessons and through 'wonder weeks'. Three times a year, pupils have the chance to follow a theme for a whole week. This year, through these weeks, pupils' understanding of art, ecology and geography has been enhanced.
- Alston Lane pupils are hungry learners. They take every opportunity to learn and develop their understanding. Their personal development is also developed systematically through leadership opportunities and an extensive range of enrichment activities. These include weekly clubs related to health and fitness, reading and the arts. Educational visits are valuable and very popular with the pupils. These include residential trips. When talking to the pupils, it is clear that they do not have a clear enough understanding of the ways of life of British people, beyond their own experience. Once again, you have identified this gap in pupils' learning and altered the school's curriculum. This will be implemented from September.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to raise the standards that pupils attain by the end of key stage 1
- they ensure that pupils are even better prepared for life in modern Britain, by further developing their understanding of people from a wider range of different backgrounds.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your assistant headteachers. I met with four members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority. I spoke to groups of pupils during their breaktime. School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching. I also visited classrooms with you and looked at pupils' work. I examined child protection information. I took account of the 29 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 47 responses to the school's own questionnaire. I took account of responses from seven staff members to an inspection survey. I considered the views of the 27 pupils who completed an inspection survey and 27 parents who texted me their comments.