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Mrs P Carter
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Carter

Short inspection of St Oswald's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. At St Oswald's, you are ambitious for all pupils and strive to meet their needs. Pupils are given a broad range of experiences, which help them to enjoy their time at school and prepare them well for the next stage in their learning. You are clear where there are strengths and also know where improvement is needed.

There is a welcoming and happy atmosphere at your school. The positive ethos of the school is evident in all aspects of school life and there is a purposeful aspect to all lessons. Your pupils are a credit to the school as they consistently display good manners, are polite and are keen to speak to visitors about their learning. Pupils' behaviour is very good; they have a strong understanding of the school's values and take a pride in both their work and being a member of the school community. There was clear evidence of pupils putting these values into practice in lessons, at playtime and around the school. Pupils enjoy school; they work hard in lessons and want to do well. There is an air of calm, both in lessons and around the school. The vast majority of parents say that pupils are happy and pupils confirm this view. Pupils say that incidents of poor behaviour are rare and are dealt with quickly and well. They also say that instances of bullying are rare.

At the previous inspection, inspectors reported pupils' behaviour as a strength. This continues to be the case. In the lessons we observed, pupils' attitudes to learning

were impeccable. It is obvious that they love coming to school and really enjoy their learning. Pupils are mature and articulate. They happily express their views on a range of subjects. They talk in particular about new topics in writing and how the teaching of reasoning skills is helping with their skills in mathematics. The previous inspection report also commented on how children at St Oswald's have a very good start to their learning in the early years foundation stage. This has certainly been continued and the practice observed in the early years setting was very strong, providing children with the means to be successful learners.

The previous inspection also identified a few areas for the school to work on. The previous inspector suggested that pupils needed to work more independently. You have increased the opportunities for pupils to do so. Pupils have regular opportunities to solve problems and to develop reasoning skills in mathematics. They also develop investigation skills in science. This has improved pupils' ability to contribute to their own learning and has enabled the development of their independent learning skills.

We discussed how there should be a continued focus on the teaching of spelling so that pupils' progress in writing continues to improve. We also agreed that a focus should remain on the progress made by disadvantaged pupils so that the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally diminishes further.

Safeguarding is effective

The school's safeguarding policy and procedures meet requirements, including combating radicalisation and extremism. You ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media. You have made sure that systems for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are rigorous and robust. There are also regular checks of these systems by senior staff and governors.

Up-to-date training has been delivered so that roles and responsibilities are understood by all, including catering staff and governors. The vast majority of parents report that pupils are safe. There is a parent consultation group which reviews policies and information given by the school and the group gives feedback, on which the school acts. Regular visitors, such as police, give safety talks to pupils around a range of issues such as personal safety and holiday safety. School assemblies are also used to provide information to pupils so they know how to stay safe.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, at the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils' progress in writing was low compared to the national average. The new subject leader for English took decisive steps to improve this situation. She provided training for teachers which enabled them to fully embed the principles of the English curriculum. This has led to clear improvements in the way in which pupils' work is assessed. Assessments are used well to ensure that teaching is more closely matched to the abilities of

pupils. Pupils have increased opportunities to write at length across the curriculum. As a result of these changes, the proportion of pupils who achieve the standards expected for their age in writing has increased across the school. This was clearly observed in your own assessment information and the progress I observed in pupils' books. We did discuss, however, that pupils' spelling could improve further.

- One of your key priorities is to diminish the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. You identified that there was more to do in this area and you and your senior leaders have instigated a rigorous programme of monitoring which is helping you to evaluate more accurately the needs of this group. Teaching is now more clearly matched to pupils' needs. Guidance from you and your senior leaders ensures a focus on overcoming any barriers to learning and accelerating pupils' progress. Governors are knowledgeable and closely involved with the school. They are effective in their monitoring of school improvement and evaluating the impact of leaders' actions on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. Your most recent information shows that the difference in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils is diminishing. Work in pupils' books, also confirms this to be the case. We discussed that, although the difference is diminishing, there is still more to do.
- Pupils are now more engaged by the curriculum because of themes based around learning which engage pupils more readily. Staff discover pupils' interests in September and base curricular topics around this. For example, the Year 1 pupils were very engaged with the science lesson on habitats as this complemented a class trip to the zoo the day afterwards. This really brought the lesson to life and pupils were able to discuss the habitats of the animals they had chosen to study in detail. In key stage 2, history topics are taught well and the topic of the Anglo-Saxons has really grabbed the imagination of the pupils. This has resulted in high-quality work, deepening pupils' knowledge of history and developing their historical skills.
- Teaching assistants provide very effective support to pupils across the school. They are proactive in supporting and challenging pupils. They have strong questioning skills which enable pupils to think deeply about their learning. Teaching assistants are helping to ensure that pupils' progress across the curriculum is strong.
- You welcome the high level of challenge from external partners and governors because this helps you to develop your plans with confidence. Together, you have established a sense of cohesion and purpose which gives a strong direction to the school. You have also given senior leaders many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. As a result, there is a strong capacity for further improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally continues to diminish
- the recent strategies to improve pupils' spelling become embedded so that outcomes in writing are further strengthened.

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

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke to you and other senior leaders, six members of the governing body, a representative of the diocese, and a representative of the local group of schools, teachers and pupils. I made short visits to seven lessons with either yourself or other senior leaders, during which I spoke to pupils and looked at the quality of their work. I spoke to five parents at the start of the school day. I also considered the views of 50 parents and 16 members of staff who completed online questionnaires. I reviewed your self-evaluation form as well as a range of other documentation. I also checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements and recruitment information. I checked that the school meets the requirements regarding the publication of specified information on its website.