

12 December 2018

Mr Robert O'Malley
St Monica's Catholic Primary School
Currier Drive
Neath Hill
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK14 6HB

Dear Mr O'Malley

Short inspection of St Monica's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in January 2016, you have relentlessly focused on raising standards, particularly in writing, and improving the quality of teaching. There have been significant changes to staffing. Throughout these changes you have shown strong and determined leadership. All staff and governors are working hard to live up to the school's mission, 'Let respect, trust and love live here.'

Staff morale is high. There is a strong sense of teamwork, and all staff feel proud to be a member of the school. As a result, the school's capacity to maintain, develop and deliver improvements is effective. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation is reliable and accurate. Good-quality training for staff ensures that pupils make good progress.

The vast majority of parents believe that the school is well led and well managed. Parents describe the school as 'fantastic', 'safe' and 'amazing'. One parent commented: 'We love St Monica's. My child is doing very well academically but just as importantly is happy, has plenty of friends and enjoys going to school.'

Central to the school's ethos is knowing each child as an individual. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent due to the high levels of pastoral care. Pupils are proud of their school and describe the school as 'caring', 'thoughtful' and 'fun'. One pupil said, 'I love coming to school every day.'

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors highlighted good teaching, strong and supportive challenge from governors, and good behaviour. These aspects remain strong. Inspectors asked you to raise standards in writing by working with other schools in your local cluster to check your assessments of writing. Your work in this area over time has been effective, and staff value the training they have received. As a consequence, pupils are making better progress and achieving higher standards in their writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. The school has well-developed procedures to protect pupils. For example, regular reviews and effective monitoring by governors hold leaders to account effectively. Record-keeping is detailed, and all actions are followed up meticulously. Precise and detailed procedures ensure that school staff are properly vetted before they work at the school.

You and your team have created a strong sense of community, based on Christian values. Safeguarding is at the heart of this nurturing and caring environment. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they have a strong understanding of how to stay safe in different situations, for example when using the internet. They are confident that they have someone to turn to for support when needed. Older pupils were keen to talk about how the 'restorative friends' help and support other children during breaktime. One pupil said, 'We like to help people so they enjoy their playtime.'

You encourage and know your pupils well, and they are very proud to be part of the 'St Monica's community'. As a result, the vast majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire agreed that their children are well cared for and feel safe. One parent commented, 'St Monica's is a caring school, with a caring environment.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at: the teaching of reading and the progress pupils make; how effectively you have improved the teaching of writing at key stage 2; and how you have developed the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- You have focused uncompromisingly on improving the teaching of writing across the school. At the time of the last inspection, standards in writing were below those achieved in reading and mathematics. You established a clear writing strategy to enable pupils to reach higher standards in writing. With your staff, you reviewed the writing curriculum and implemented a plan, which, coupled with effective staff development, has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- You introduced a more creative approach to writing using good-quality texts to engage pupils, especially boys. Writing in pupils' books confirms that pupils are

becoming increasingly skilled at editing and improving their writing. Pupils take pride in their work and present it neatly. Pupils make good progress in writing, and attainment in writing at key stage 1 has been at or above the expected levels for the past three years.

- The school is rightly focused on reading at key stage 2. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who made good progress was in line with the national average. You have made it a priority to bring the progress of pupils in reading up to the rate of progress they make in mathematics and writing. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading. They told me that they love the new books in the library and the reading competitions they have in school. The changes you have made to the teaching and assessment of reading are having a positive effect on pupils' progress in reading.
- In reading, disadvantaged pupils did not do as well as their peers in 2018 in the Year 6 national tests. Therefore, I wanted to explore how you are using the additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make at least the same progress as their peers.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils in and around the school is effective. You have identified the barriers affecting their learning and have established a clear strategy to ensure that all interventions have a sharp focus. This has helped pupils to develop their confidence. Your staff know these pupils well and provide extra support to help them learn well in lessons. The guidance provided by staff is helping pupils to build their independence and become good learners. Work in their books shows that disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Although it is clear that the additional spending is having an impact on outcomes in writing and mathematics, you have rightly identified that disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress they are capable of in reading.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements to the teaching of reading are embedded further so that pupils' progress in key stage 2 reading matches the progress they make in writing and mathematics
- they improve the progress pupils make in reading, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

David Harris
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and your staff. We talked about the improvements which have been made since the last inspection. I observed learning with you in several lessons. I held meetings with two governors, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.

Before the inspection, I examined a variety of documents, including the school's website, published performance information, and a summary of your school's self-evaluation document. I took account of 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including nine written comments. I also considered 28 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. A range of documentary evidence was evaluated, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance.