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Mr Carl McIver
Headteacher
St Willibrord's RC Primary School
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Dear Mr McIver

Short inspection of St Willibrord's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 May 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 and your newly established leadership team have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. You quickly set about tackling the areas for improvement from the last inspection with a great deal of success. Consequently, staff work well together and share good practice. There is a consistent approach to teaching and learning and you have used the strengths of your staff well, especially in the teaching of science at key stage 2. As a result, pupils make good progress in a variety of subjects.

You are not complacent and recognise that while standards are high at key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving higher standards in writing and mathematics can be increased across the school. You also acknowledge that, although outcomes in phonics are improving after a dip in 2016, further improvements can be made.

Governors constantly reflect on their own performance. As a result, they never stand still with their own development. They ask leaders challenging questions as they want the best for all pupils. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities and have taken steps to make sure that there are governors with the skills necessary to fulfil these duties. Governors appreciate the quality of the information they receive from your leaders.

Pupils behave well at all times and are thriving in the happy, vibrant learning community you have created. Staff work tirelessly for the pupils and it was a pleasure to watch them lead a 'wake and shake' session during wet playtime with over 100 pupils dancing happily in the hall. As one parent said: 'I feel that my son will look back at his primary school with nothing but happy memories.' Parents also value the care that their children receive, with one parent telling me that: 'Staff look after the children like they are their own'.

Your mission statement to 'Grow in God' shines through. Pupils' care for one another is evident in the way they support each other in lessons and at playtimes. Younger pupils appreciate the fact that 'If you are upset, older children will come and play with you.' Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when online. They are taught how to stay healthy and enjoy the healthy meals, including breakfast, that they receive in school. They have a good understanding of different faiths and communities in Britain and the wider world. British values are promoted well and, as a result, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding is effective

Safeguarding is at the heart of everything you do. Your governors ensure that all robust policies and procedures are in place, including checks on teachers and governors. Your staff receive up-to-date training and are ever vigilant. The designated safeguarding leads have a thorough knowledge of individual pupils. They work effectively with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive appropriate support or protection. The exceptional support the school provides is valued by parents, with one telling me that 'School helps us as well as the children. They are there if you need support.' As a result, safeguarding is highly effective.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have built a stable leadership team to help you achieve the ambitious goals you have set.
- Warm and respectful relationships between staff and pupils create a purposeful and productive atmosphere. The school goes out of its way to provide the right kind of support, including for those pupils who present the most challenging behaviour because of complex difficulties.
- School leaders have invested in the work of teaching assistants. They receive high-quality training, set challenging targets and are valued by teachers, pupils and parents because of their expertise and support.
- The leader for inclusion is passionate about making sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities develop positive attitudes to their learning and achieve well. This includes pupils who access the school's designated resource provision. High-quality teaching and well-targeted additional support have ensured that these pupils enjoy school and make progress that is in line with their peers. Adults interact well with pupils encouraging independence.

As a result, many of these pupils work within the main school for a large proportion of their time.

- Overall attendance is good and continues to improve. Leaders ensure that pupils' attendance is tracked carefully and the family support worker gives additional support to families to help ensure that pupils attend regularly and on time. Unexplained absences are followed up quickly.
- A key line of enquiry for this inspection was about the progress children make in the Reception class. Children start with skills and abilities below those typical for their age in many areas. They make good progress from their starting points so that by the end of Reception, the proportion reaching a good level of development is similar to that seen nationally. There was a dip in this proportion in 2016, although this remains around the national figure. The proportion on track to achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception in 2017 is similar to that seen in 2016. This is despite fewer pupils starting school with skills and abilities typical for their age.
- Adults provide stimulating environments in both Nursery and Reception with a wide range of exciting activities. Teachers plan for opportunities to develop children's language in all areas. Adults question children well to extend their thinking and encourage them to use a growing vocabulary. As a result, children, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers in the early years use every opportunity to further develop children's skills. For example, teachers encouraged children to go out in the snow and one child told me that she had 'built a snow castle which looks like my sandcastle'. Children's developing writing skills are supported well and, as a result, children in the Reception class are able to write simple sentences independently.
- Another line of enquiry was focused on the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics at key stage 1. Currently, more pupils are on track to reach the expected standard and the higher standards in writing and mathematics than in 2016. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils currently in school make good progress from their starting points. Lower-attaining pupils make particularly good progress in writing in key stage 1 to reach the standard expected for their age.
- The most able pupils use a range of writing and are beginning to experiment with different sentences. For example, when writing instructions, one Year 2 pupil wrote: 'Place the top inside to create the wooden deck.' Boys enjoy writing as a result of the carefully planned writing tasks which teachers set.
- Accurate assessment is used to quickly identify pupils who are falling behind and additional support is put in place. Within lessons, teachers check regularly on what pupils are doing and support them to make improvements. Consequently, both girls and boys are making good progress towards reaching the standard expected for their age.
- Pupils make good progress with calculations in key stage 1. The most able pupils are challenged with word problems and with puzzles which involve missing numbers. This enables pupils to think more deeply about their understanding of

mathematics. However, there are limited opportunities to investigate numbers and number patterns, which limits pupils' progress towards the higher standards.

- You recognise that by the end of key stage 1, more of these pupils should be achieving the higher standards and working at greater depth.
- I also looked at how well phonics is taught in school. As a result of the changes which leaders have made to the teaching of letter sounds, pupils, including disadvantage pupils, are making better progress in phonics. Clear tracking and monitoring of what pupils can understand means that swift support is put in place for those pupils who are falling behind. However, the rate of progress for some pupils is still too slow. Some pupils do not have the opportunity to work with the sounds expected for their age.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new approach to phonics is firmly embedded so that pupils are working at the standard expected for their age
- a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards in mathematics and writing across school by ensuring that:
 - pupils have additional opportunities to apply their skills in writing in history and geography
 - pupils are given opportunities to investigate numbers.

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 Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, members of your leadership team, teachers, and governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. You, your assistant headteachers and I visited classes to observe learning and looked at work in pupils' books. I met with pupils throughout the day and spoke with three parents in the playground before school. I considered the 18 responses and the 17 freetext comments made by parents on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses to the staff questionnaire. I heard several pupils read and observed pupils on the playground and in the dining hall.

I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding, including checking on the school's policies, procedures and record keeping. I talked with you, other staff, and governors about how the school ensures that children are kept safe. I also considered a range of other documentation, including school improvement planning and information about pupils' progress and attainment.