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Mrs C Sergeant
Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School
Northumberland Terrace
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Dear Mrs Sergeant

Short inspection of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 September 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 lead with passion and a commitment to provide the very best possible care for the pupils in your school. As a consequence, your school has achieved a broad array of awards including the 'school of sanctuary award'. You believe that these awards not only offer additional opportunities to pupils, but also allow staff to develop further their skills. Your ability to distribute leadership effectively ensures that staff are highly trained. It also means that they can support you in carrying out school improvement in line with the values that you and all your team hold so dear.

Governors share your dedication and your high expectations. They have a very clear understanding of the strategic role they play and offer guidance and challenge to leaders at all levels. As a result, they contribute effectively to the development of the school.

The pupils I spoke to greatly value the many opportunities you provide for them to make decisions about the further development of the school. For example, you gave them the opportunity to redesign their canteen, choosing new tables and chairs. This allows them to see out of the windows into their school gardens where your caretaker leads his gardening club. Pupils chose to decorate the walls with your school's value statements. You provide opportunities for them to prepare vegetables they have grown in the school gardens for your cook to serve at lunchtimes. As a consequence, your pupils feel great pride in their school environment. They act as

positive role models as representatives on many councils which you provide for them. This includes digital leaders, eco-councillors, school ambassadors and members of the chaplaincy group.

During the previous inspection, the inspector noted that leaders should ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently effective across school by sharing good practice and promoting challenge in all lessons. You have addressed this action successfully. You provide staff with a broad range of opportunities to share best practice from each other. Additionally, by providing high-quality training and links with other schools, your staff's ability to challenge pupils, including the most able, is more effective. As a consequence of this focused and determined approach, teaching is consistently strong across your school. You are also justly proud that teachers provide exciting lessons which enable pupils to think deeply and make rapid progress in learning.

The previous inspector also noted that checks on pupils' progress required further refinement. Once again, you have successfully addressed this issue. Leaders and teachers confidently track and measure the achievement of pupils, including those who receive additional support. This has ensured that the progress of these groups is rapid and most pupils reach the targets that teachers set for them.

We discussed areas where further work is required to support your school improvement. You are aware that, while attendance levels have improved, the level of persistent absence of some pupils is still too high. Additionally, the proportion of pupils who reach the standards expected for their age by the end of key stage 1 remains below the national average. Finally, leaders recognise that the positive efforts to increase the number of pupils who achieve at the higher levels in reading and writing by the end of Year 6 require further development.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your school site is safe and secure. Vigilant staff ensure that the identity of visitors is closely checked on entry to the school.

You provide governors and staff with a broad range of training. This ensures that they are able to keep pupils safe. Your procedures are thorough and you keep detailed records relating to the safety of pupils. The annual safeguarding audits which staff undertake show that your procedures are fully compliant with requirements.

You provide pupils with regular opportunities to learn how to stay safe. Most recently, Year 6 pupils undertook workshops on the dangers of gang culture. This supports pupils in making positive and educated choices in their own lives. Pupils who I spoke to during the inspection greatly valued learning about equality and diversity. One pupil noted, 'Everyone is a friend: it's in our code of conduct. We are living and learning together in faith.'

Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View survey agree that yours is a safe school where pupils thrive. A typical example was, 'This school is a safe haven within the community where children and parents can seek sanctuary and support. The school does more than just educate its pupils: it nurtures, supports and challenges children as they grow physically, mentally, but above all, emotionally.'

Inspection findings

- Your thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development mean that my findings were no surprise to you. You work effectively with leaders and staff to provide a broad and balanced education for the pupils in school. As a result, leaders are making considerable progress in bringing about school improvement.
- You have worked closely with other leaders and staff to improve pupils' attendance. Pupils receive regular certificates, rewards and prizes for attending school regularly. You communicate with parents via regular newsletters, telephone calls and meetings. Leaders offer a broad range of support to parents to ensure that their children can attend school regularly. The pupils I spoke to were very clear in their appreciation of good attendance. One pupil noted, 'If you don't come to school, you don't learn.' Your hard work and dedication in supporting the whole family has had a positive impact. Since the previous inspection, attendance rates have risen and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased. You are aware that further work is required in this area to ensure that levels of persistent absence continue to decrease to reflect those seen nationally.
- Children enter your school with skills below those typically expected for their age. From these low starting points, leaders and staff ensure that children's understanding develops well. You note that one of the greatest barriers to the children's learning is their poor language development. Leaders and teachers take part in research projects with universities. This work enables staff to improve their ability to question children effectively and to develop environments that are language rich. You have also introduced education for two-year-old children. This, too, has been highly successful. I observed young children demonstrating excellent standards of behaviour and showing a clear ability to cooperate and to learn effectively in the classroom. As a consequence of the concerted efforts made by you and your team, the progress of children in the early years and key stage 1 is accelerating. However, you are aware that further work is needed to increase the number of children who reach the standards expected for their age by the end of key stage 1.
- You have noted that pupils' poor language development on entry has affected their ability to develop a clear understanding of phonics. You have addressed this issue most effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants place great emphasis on talking, writing and early reading. You provide workshops for parents and have become much more focused in the ways in which phonics is taught. Your hard work has been successful. There has been a significant rise in the numbers of pupils passing the phonics screening check year on year.

- Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with exciting and challenging work. Teachers ensure that pupils are given writing experiences linked to real life. Leaders call these 'irresistible contexts'. Expectations in writing are high, with a focus on neat, cursive handwriting. Examples of high-quality writing are displayed around the school to ensure that pupils are aware of the standard to aim towards. You invest considerable sums of money in providing high-quality and challenging books for all pupils in your school. These books are displayed beautifully throughout the building to encourage pupils to read. You told me, 'We don't cut back on quality – our children deserve the best.' Teachers also ensure that pupils read high-quality texts in the classroom. Teachers' questioning skills ensure that all pupils, including the most able, are provided with regular opportunities to think deeply and to discuss their work together. As a result of concerted efforts and close tracking of achievement, much progress has been made in this area. However, you are aware that further work is required to ensure that a greater number of most-able pupils in key stage 2 reach the higher levels in reading and writing by the end of Year 6.
- When pupils leave your school, they enter the next stage of their academic journey with knowledge, self-belief and the confidence to aim high. This is truly a 'school of sanctuary'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work with parents and outside agencies to ensure that persistent absence rates decline further
- key stage 1 outcomes continue to rise towards the national average
- good practice in reading and writing becomes embedded so that a greater proportion of the most able pupils reach the higher levels by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, two deputy headteachers and a group of middle leaders. I also met with two learning mentors, six members of the governing body, including the vice-chair of the governing body, and your office manager. I spoke with your school improvement partner and the archdiocesan schools' officer. I had informal discussions with parents and a group of pupils to seek their views. Finally, I met with a group of teachers and teaching assistants.

I visited classes with you from Nursery to Year 6 and I scrutinised examples of pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I reviewed a number of documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children, the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, assessment information, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour logs and attendance records. I also took account of the 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the 25 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 19 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I considered information posted on the school's website.