

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Paul Gibbons
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School
Lock Lane
Partington
Manchester
M31 4PJ

Dear Mr Gibbons

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School

Following my visit on 6 April 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in January 2014, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the school's behaviour policy is consistently represented and valued in individual classrooms
- develop a consistent approach to building up pupils' skills and abilities to be resilient in their approach to their work and life
- work with families to ensure that new pupils develop positive habits and attitudes toward being in school every day.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the inclusion leader and the learning mentor responsible for pastoral care. We discussed

the actions the school has taken since the last inspection. I also met with three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. You and I visited classrooms to observe pupils at work. I met with a group of 14 pupils to gain their views of the school and spoke to others informally. I observed pupils' behaviour around school, at morning break and at lunchtime. I evaluated your improvement plan and considered other evidence, including behaviour and attendance documentation and information relating to safeguarding.

Context

The school has stayed reasonably stable since the inspection in May 2016. A newly qualified teacher joined the school in September 2016. An existing member of staff was appointed to the role of learning mentor for pastoral care in a direct response to the improvements needed in behaviour in school. The timing of lunchtimes has changed, as has the length of the school day, which has recently been altered on a trial basis. The school has improved the outside space with the addition of a 'trim trail'.

Main findings

It is clear that you, your governors and the staff team were initially knocked by the findings of the inspection in May 2016; consequently morale dipped. However, because of you and your senior leadership team's determination and positive outlook you have quickly set about making the changes needed to get the school back on track. As a result, much has already been achieved, including instilling high expectations of pupils.

You have spent time ensuring that you have a detailed and thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have used these well to plan appropriate, well-defined actions to address the areas of development identified at the last inspection. Your development plan is well structured, with suitable timescales and indications of what success will look like. This shows that you clearly know what needs to happen to move the school forward. The implementation of your plans has been effective in bringing about swift improvements to the school, most notably in ensuring that lunchtimes are more purposeful and that high-quality support is offered to vulnerable pupils to help them manage their feelings and actions in the playground and around school. As a result, lunchtime is now calm, and pupils who might sometimes struggle to control their behaviour have strategies to avoid getting themselves into stressful situations.

Governors are very supportive of the school and are well informed as to the developments and improvements that are being made. They are pleased to see all that has been achieved so far, but are not afraid to challenge and question leaders where the need arises. They, like you and senior leaders, can see that there is more

still to be done. To this end, they are committed to make an important contribution to the school's continuing improvement journey.

You have successfully raised the whole school community's expectations of behaviour through re-establishing the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies. You have worked in partnership with staff, governors, parents and pupils to revise the school's rules. Pupils' behaviour around school and in the playground is much improved. Staff are consistent in their approach to behaviour. Pupils consider that they are treated fairly. Lunchtime staff say that behaviour has improved because pupils are keen to keep to the rules and they listen much more responsively when an adult asks them to do something.

Behaviour in the classroom and pupils' attitudes to learning were identified as positive at the time of the previous inspection. This has continued. Classrooms are purposeful, lessons are taught well, and pupils are eager and keen to learn because of the interesting activities they are offered. The school rules are prominent in classrooms. However, the school 'traffic light' system for behaviour is not as obvious. In some cases it is consigned to a small corner of a room or the back of an open door. This is an important part of the new behaviour system and I agree with you that the inconsistency of approach gives the impression that it is less valued in some classes than in others.

At the previous inspection, behaviour at lunchtimes was considered to be a concern. The changes put in place by leaders have quickly transformed this part of the school day. For example, timings have been altered so that the playtime at lunch is shorter and much more playground space around school is available to pupils across early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. Sports coaches offer regular activities, including popular football sessions, and pupils love the new 'trim trail' that has recently been installed. Pupils that struggle with their behaviour at playtime or want to spend their time more quietly are offered gardening activities or indoor clubs. Any pupil that has a problem, or is sad or lonely, can sit on the friendship bench and someone will come and talk to them. A member of the senior leadership team is always on duty and lunchtime staff have benefited from training. This time of the day is now much calmer. Pupils enjoy their playtime and say they have lots to do. They were very keen to tell the inspector how there were rarely any fights or arguments any more and 'it is a much happier place'.

You have transformed the pastoral care you offer to pupils and it is a growing strength. Together with your senior leaders, you have effectively identified pupils in school that may be vulnerable in some way, for example if they have difficulty in behaving, have a lack of confidence or have been bereaved. You regularly monitor these pupils and check on their achievement and personal development and welfare. As appropriate, they are offered an excellent range of support. To this end, you refocused a member of staff to become the learning mentor leading this range of intervention activities. These might be one-to-one sessions or a regular programme of support for building confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are taught to

deal with feelings and to develop strategies to express their emotions in an appropriate way. This work has already had a profound effect on individuals' well-being and significantly reduced the number of behaviour incidents, including the use of derogatory language and bullying. The number of pupils that talked with feeling to the inspector about the changes in their behaviour and attitude toward themselves was moving. For example, 'I used to be angry inside, but now I know how to handle it', 'I lost my way, but now I have confidence inside me' and 'I get help to feel good about myself and then I have a happy day' are typical comments from pupils.

Pupils are very clear what bullying is and are unanimous in their view that 'it used to happen, but not any more'. Similarly, derogatory language does occur, but is rare and quickly dealt with by adults. You regularly seek pupils' views about aspects of school, and pupils feel listened to. One way that is highly valued by all pupils is the 'I need you to know' boxes. Pupils are encouraged to write a note and pop it in the box if they are particularly pleased or sad or unhappy about something. These boxes are well established and regularly used by pupils, who know that every note they drop in will be responded to that day by the learning mentor, whether it is something big or small. As a number of pupils said, 'We are always taken seriously.'

Personal development is important to the school and is often closely linked to the school's Christian values. Pupils do benefit from opportunities in the curriculum to develop their self-esteem, confidence and positive attitudes toward themselves and others. However, this aspect of the curriculum is not consistent across the school. This makes it difficult to see the progression of pupils' skills and abilities over time and results in pupils not building up as strong a bank of skills as they could do for a resilient attitude to learning and to life.

At the last inspection, pupils' attendance was identified as an area for improvement. You have taken appropriate action to strengthen the school's response to absence. Robust systems are in place and staff respond quickly to anyone that is not in school. As a result, you have had some notable successes. You make being in school every day a high profile, providing opportunities to celebrate in assemblies classes that reach the target of 97% for the week and certificates to reward good and improving attendance. However, you recognise that further work is needed to keep promoting the importance of good and regular attendance and in particular ensuring that pupils and their families that are new to the school develop good habits about being in school every day.

External support

The local authority has provided effective and well-tailored support for you. This has included arranging the auditing of behaviour and attendance in school and securing the support of an expert headteacher. You are making the most of all the support available. You and your leadership team say that you have found the advice and opportunity to have a sounding board for your ideas and developments invaluable.

Regular meetings with a local authority representative are helpful in identifying next steps and ensuring that you are receiving the right support at the right time.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector