

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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5 July 2017

Anya Richardson  
Rainford CofE Primary School  
Cross Pit Lane  
Rainford  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
WA11 8AJ

Dear Mrs Richardson

### **Short inspection of Rainford CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 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. Since arriving at the school, you have provided determined and confident leadership. There have been staff changes and difficulties with recruitment since the last inspection. However, you have united governors and staff in ensuring that all work as a team to do their very best for all of the pupils. You lead by example and staff respond well to the demands you make and standards that you expect.

Your evaluation of the performance of the school is accurate. Development planning focuses on the current priorities for improvement, which are shared with and understood by all staff and governors. Staff are very appreciative of the development opportunities they have. Staff spoke with great enthusiasm about the 'outstanding leaders programme', which is ensuring that they understand their individual and collective responsibility to secure further improvements.

Since the previous inspection, you have worked hard to improve all aspects of provision. You and your team are keen to ensure that the pupils have a very positive experience. Pupils benefit from interesting and well-planned learning opportunities across a range of subjects. As the chair of governors stated during the inspection, 'We are committed to providing pupils with an experience to help them prepare for their future.' The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits, visitors and after-school activities. It was wonderful to see pupils of all ages engaging in the 'Olympics' after-school club. Pupils spoke with great appreciation of

the residential outdoor activities and the themed weeks that run throughout the school year. The pupils understand how hard the staff work on their behalf. In return, pupils work hard and their behaviour in and around school is consistently good. They have positive attitudes to learning and always present their work to the best of their ability. Displays around the school are inspiring for the pupils and the environment supports the pupils in their learning.

The Christian ethos pervades all that you and the pupils do. There is a caring and aspirational climate that is helping staff and pupils work together effectively. Community links, including those with All Saints C of E Church, enhance the pupils' experience. All are rightly proud of the School's 'Partnership Award', which reflects the high-quality engagement of the pupils in the community.

Governors work well with the school leadership to support and challenge on aspects of improvement. Alongside the school leadership team, they are working hard to ensure that all parents fully appreciate the work that the school team does for their children. One parent, whose children had recently started at the school, said that 'my children have been welcomed with open arms and the school could not have done more'. However, this is not consistently the view of all parents, with a number expressing concern about some of the recent changes.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the governors have ensured that there is a culture of safeguarding. The safety of the pupils is given the highest priority in the school, with policies and procedures being followed in detail each and every day. You have made sure that arrangements for the care and protection of pupils, families and staff are thorough and working well. Records kept by staff about concerns, referrals and support for pupils are detailed and of high quality. The governor with responsibility for child protection is committed to continuing the rigorous focus on keeping the children safe. You ensure that staff and governors engage in a wide range of safeguarding training, using expertise from within the school, the local authority and also from further afield. This means that staff are up to date in their knowledge of child protection. You have trained and challenged staff so that they understand the risks to pupils of exposure to radical views of life in modern Britain. Staff know how to refer any concerns they might have about an adult harming a child.

Pupils reported that they feel safe in school because 'teachers are always available to help'. The learning mentor is diligent in her work and she ensures that links with other professionals are developed well to enhance pupils' safety. Pupils know they can speak to her if they have any concerns. She has been proactive in setting up small group activities to support attendance, bereavement and friendship. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the internet because they learn about it in assemblies. They report that staff deal with any poor behaviour. The older pupils particularly, in their role as buddies, understand that they also have a responsibility to be good role models.

## Inspection findings

- Pupils at Rainford Church CofE Primary School make good progress from their starting points. Your analysis of pupil performance and progress in 2016 was accurate. You identified the need to improve provision so that more pupils achieve at the above-expected level. You were very clear in your analysis that performance in mathematics is better than in reading and writing. Your analysis was in line with the focused lines of enquiry during the inspection.
- First, I considered what the school team is doing to accelerate progress for the most able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, so that more achieve above the expected standard in reading and writing. In 2016, the progress made by the most able Year 6 pupils did not reflect their ability and what they were capable of.
- The school has responded positively to this challenge. Leaders are providing teachers with detailed information about the progress of these pupils. Most teachers are using this to plan interesting and challenging work. However, this is not being done consistently to the same standard across all classes.
- During our visits to classrooms, we witnessed teachers working with most-able pupils to improve their progress in reading. You have focused on providing more opportunities for these pupils to develop their comprehension skills and broaden their vocabulary. We saw Year 5 pupils developing some high-level inference skills in their reading comprehension work. Their progress was enhanced because of their teacher's high-quality questioning skills and demanding precise use of language from the pupils.
- Pupils really enjoy the whole-class reading and are increasingly reading independently. Sessions on phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) are a real strength; most-able pupils are very engaged and confident to learn new words and sounds. As the pupils move through school, they are increasingly reading for pleasure. Most-able pupils are taking the lead in respect of this. It was lovely to see some of the older pupils reading high-quality texts in the outdoor quiet area at lunchtime.
- Similarly, these pupils are now being challenged in their writing. The school has developed an effective strategy for pupils to develop key writing skills and apply them in extended writing activities. Where this strategy has been implemented effectively, teachers have high expectations of what they expect pupils to produce. This is beginning to have a positive impact on an increasing number of the most able pupils reaching even higher standards. We saw some good examples in pupils' books where pupils had produced imaginative writing, with good use of connectives and other linguistic devices to add interest. Year 6 pupils, using the video clip of 'The Piano' as a stimulus, developed some high-quality editing skills in respect of sentence structure and quality of language.
- Current assessment shows that an increasing number of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making good progress in their reading and writing. A higher proportion are already working above the expected standard than at the end of 2016. You acknowledge that at times, in whole-class lessons, the most able could make even more progress. You have provided effective training to support teachers in

meeting the learning needs of all their pupils, and this is an ongoing school focus. Pupil premium funding is used well to support targeted support for most disadvantaged pupils. This is appreciated by these pupils who enjoy their focused sessions. In some classes, pupils are developing key reading and writing skills in all of their subjects. However, there is further work needed to ensure that this is consistently of a good quality in all classes.

- A further line of enquiry focused on the impact of key leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the subject that they are responsible for. During the inspection, we saw some good-quality teaching and learning. Relationships between the teachers and the pupils were very positive. Stimulating resources were used and pupils responded well. On most occasions, expectations ensured that pupils were productive and made progress.
- The newly appointed reading and writing coordinators are enthusiastic and very clear about strengths and areas for development in their areas of responsibility. They make regular checks on classroom practice to give teachers the detailed information they need, in order to challenge colleagues to improve their skills further.
- Given some of the recent staffing changes, you have had to take on the leadership of mathematics. Pupil progress is consistently good in mathematics at all phases of the school. In analysing pupils' books, there is evidence that pupils' mental mathematical skills are tested more frequently. Problem-solving is embedded well and pupils have many opportunities to develop their reasoning skills. You are currently looking to coach another member of the team to take over this key leadership task.
- The leadership of non-core subjects is given high status. Evidence in pupils' books shows that the quality of teaching and learning is equally good across a range of subjects. However, there are times when pupils' written work is not always at the same standard when they complete their topic work. Pupils do not develop their reading skills in all subjects.
- Governors are very appreciative of the regular updates that leaders provide them with about the provision in the classroom and the performance of the pupils. Leaders who are relatively new to their role are benefiting from the opportunity to present developments in their area of responsibility to governors. These leaders are being challenged by governors.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is further improvement in the communication with parents to ensure that all understand the work that the school team is doing to support their children
- ensure that pupils, particularly the most able, have more opportunities to practise and apply key reading and writing skills across all subjects
- an increasing number of pupils achieve at the above-expected level in reading and writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Morley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, you and I observed and discussed pupils' learning and talked to pupils about their work. I reviewed your evaluations of the school, your plans for improvement and information about pupils' progress. I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair, to hear about the work of the school since the previous inspection. I met with an officer from the local authority to understand how they had supported the school and their view of the progress that the school is currently making. I also met your senior leadership team to discuss their involvement in improving the school. I looked at the quality of displays on classroom walls and corridors. You and I reviewed school records of the checks made about staff suitability to work with children. We considered the school's child protection policy together. I reviewed examples of case files about pupils, as well as evidence of your work with other professionals. I spoke to some parents as they dropped their children off at school at the start of the day.