

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



30 January 2019

Mrs Catherine Piercy  
Headteacher  
Childwall Abbey School  
Childwall Abbey Road  
Childwall  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L16 5EY

Dear Mrs Piercy

### **Short inspection of Childwall Abbey School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 January 2019 with Cole Andrew, Ofsted Inspector, 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 February 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have a clear vision for your school. Your vision is that pupils will develop emotionally as well as academically. Staff and governors share your vision. Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection also understand this vision. They were able to give examples of how their children's learning and self-esteem had developed. Parents value the care and attention that their children receive while at your school.

Your staff have a detailed understanding of each pupil's needs. They work closely with parents to support pupils to develop as individuals. Parents spoken to during the inspection all valued the high quality of communication with staff.

The move to a new building has enabled you to create a calm, safe, welcoming environment for pupils and their families. Staff are proud to work at the school. They gain much from the opportunities for professional development that are offered. Staff also value the importance that leaders place on staff well-being. Pupils and their families benefit from the dedication and commitment of leaders and staff at the school. One comment by a pupil typified their views, 'This is the best school in Liverpool. It's like our family.'

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to increase opportunities for writing across the school. In order to address this, you have appointed a literacy coordinator. A review of the opportunities for writing across all subjects has taken

place. All staff have received training in how to develop pupils' writing skills. As a result, writing now has a far higher priority within the school. We saw evidence of high expectations for writing during lessons and in pupils' books. A recent pupil survey shows that there is a very positive attitude to all styles of writing. The school is now part of a pilot project in the local authority to promote writing in schools in the area.

At the previous inspection, inspectors also asked leaders to improve the progress made by pupils in mathematics and writing. There is now a system in place for assessing the ability of pupils when they join the school. This enables teachers of mathematics and English to understand what each pupil can achieve.

Pupils' progress is carefully monitored through termly assessments. Teachers in mathematics and English use this assessment information well to inform their planning. As a result, teachers are able to challenge pupils effectively. School information shows that the majority of pupils are making progress at, or above, the rate that is expected of them by the school. Those pupils not making good progress receive individualised support. As a result of the improvement in progress in mathematics and English, some pupils are now being entered for GCSE examinations.

In the wider curriculum, the use of assessment data to inform planning is less effective. As a result of this weakness, progress, although good, is not as strong in other subjects as it is in English and mathematics.

### **Safeguarding is effective**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are thorough and fit for purpose. Staff carry out checks to ensure that governors and adults employed at the school are suitable to work with pupils. Staff receive appropriate training, which keeps them informed about the school's policies and procedures. The safeguarding and welfare of pupils are high priorities for all staff.

Procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are safe when they exhibit challenging behaviour. Staff receive training to manage these situations safely. Parents value the level of care their children receive during such episodes.

The leadership team's approach to promoting e-safety is thorough. Leaders monitor pupils' internet usage at school closely. Pupils know how to stay safe online and are aware of how to use social media safely.

### **Inspection findings**

- I was interested to know whether governors are effective at holding leaders to account. In discussions with governors, it was clear that they know the school well. They were able to clearly describe the ethos of the school. Governors have a thorough understanding of the work of the school. Through visits to the school, governors can see the effect of decisions that they make.

- It was evident that governors hold leaders to account by asking challenging questions of them. For example, when asked to approve staff promotions, governors challenged leaders to justify the need for the promotion. Leaders were also challenged to explain the suitability of the proposed candidates. Governors wanted to be sure that leaders were spending funds effectively.
- Governors have responsibility for specific aspects of the school. Some governors do not have detailed knowledge of their area of responsibility. This limits their ability to understand the information that they receive about school performance. As a result, their ability to hold leaders to account is reduced.
- I also wanted to find out how effectively leaders spend pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding. Leaders maintain detailed records of the allocation of this money.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively because leaders have an accurate view of the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils. Pupil premium funding supports pupils' academic progress and their emotional development. Leaders monitor and evaluate their use of this funding effectively. Records show that over the last three years, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils was in line with or above the rate that is expected of them by the school.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is also used effectively. Pupils who enter the school below the expected standard in English and mathematics make rapid improvements.
- I also wanted to find out how well the curriculum in the sixth form prepares students for the next stage in their education. In the sixth form, students follow an individualised programme of study which prepares them well for the next stage of their education. A careers adviser provides helpful guidance to students. There are opportunities for work experience and visits to colleges. In school, sixth-form students are mentors for the younger pupils. This helps the students build their confidence in preparation for leaving school.
- Parents described how well they felt their children were being prepared for leaving school. Students were able to describe how their confidence had improved. Last year, all students leaving the school gained places at local colleges.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers make better use of assessment to plan learning in order to meet pupils' needs.
- governors strengthen their understanding of school performance so that leaders are more effectively held to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Burgess  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we met with you and other leaders. One of us also met with two members of the governing body and spoke with a representative from the local authority by telephone. One of us met with a group of students. We spoke with pupils and students at social times. One of us also met with a group of staff and spoke with a number of parents by telephone. Leaders accompanied us on visits to classrooms, where we observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects. We also looked at students' work across the school. We examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. We also scrutinised a range of policies and leaders' school improvement plan and self-evaluation. We also checked on the school's website to ensure that it complied with government guidance. We considered the responses of nine parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, along with free-text comments. We also took account of 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.