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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Paula Fearn
Headteacher
St Catherine's Roman Catholic School
Pymore Road
Bridport
Dorset
DT6 3TR

Dear Mrs Fearn

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of St Catherine's Roman Catholic School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 19 September 2025, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school meets the monitoring threshold as set out in the [Monitoring Inspection Handbook](#).

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other leaders the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I met pupils and staff, visited lessons and sampled some pupils' work. I also met with trust leaders and the chair of the local governing body. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but some aspects of the school need further improvement.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you joined the school as an executive headteacher across two schools from September 2023. An executive deputy headteacher also joined you to bring additional leadership capacity to the school. From this month, you are the substantive headteacher. The school has been diligently focused on its work to ensure the

curriculum across all subjects is carefully planned and the learning appropriately sequenced. It is now clear what pupils will learn and when. Teachers have an improved overview of how the learning builds. There have been some challenges linked to the complexities of being a smaller school. These include changes to staffing and fluctuating pupil numbers. However, the school has planned and implemented the curriculum systematically to manage this.

As a school, and with the support of the trust, you have been clearly focused on making sure the curriculum is appropriate for all pupils. Reading has a key focus, as has the work on an oracy project. The teaching of early reading is well embedded across the school. There are established processes for checking pupils are learning the skills they need. Further to this, reading is carefully mapped through the curriculum, including a recent change to the English writing curriculum. This now introduces even more texts for pupils to experience.

The work to develop the curriculum has been alongside the actions to support subject leaders to implement their subjects effectively. For example, the planned 'surgeries' provide focused time for subject leaders to work with staff. Subject leaders appreciate the planned opportunities to network and work with other colleagues. Systems to monitor and check the impact of this work are established. Staff comment positively on the supportive structures for this. Leaders are now working on embedding their subjects securely. You are currently supporting subject leaders as they transition to have oversight of different areas. This is being implemented with care.

Systems for assessment and checking how well pupils have understood their learning are in place. For the most part, staff use this to identify gaps in pupils' learning. However, in a few parts of the curriculum, checks on learning are not as developed as they should be. When this happens, gaps in pupils' learning are not well addressed. As a school, you are currently prioritising this to better inform future curriculum planning. Part of the curriculum design makes sure pupils are revisiting and reviewing their learning. This is starting to help them to remember more over time.

In early years, the class has returned to being a mixed class of reception children and Year 1. The school is clear about the starting points for the children, and the provision is well planned. As a result, children are well prepared for their start to their formal learning. As a school, you have experienced an increase in the number of pupils joining the school with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As the special educational needs coordinator, you have introduced a nurture provision to provide appropriate support for pupils when they need it.

The trust has worked closely alongside the school to support the improvement work so that it is implemented in a sustainable way. A trust-wide model of monitoring and coaching is becoming more successfully embedded across the school. This helps leaders to have a realistic view of the impact of their actions and to have clarity about the next steps to take. There has been consistent and stable leadership throughout. Staff describe there being a positive 'energy' and the priorities of the school are shared and understood.

They see the difference in the work on the curriculum and the growth of subject leadership since the last inspection. Governors share these ambitions. They have a clear model in place to support them in being able to challenge and support the school in its work.

The school has benefitted from working with a range of external partners to further its knowledge and expertise. For example, leaders have valued working with an external trust, particularly in additionally supporting subject leaders and working alongside the school to develop and implement effective systems of checking and evaluation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of the Plymouth CAST trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Plymouth, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hesketh
His Majesty's Inspector