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Mrs N Mulholland
Headteacher
St Scholastica's Catholic Primary School
Kenninghall Road
Clapton
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Dear Mrs Mulholland

Short inspection of St Scholastica's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 January 2016, 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 March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You have made sure leaders at all levels have played a significant role in successfully addressing the areas which were identified for development at the last inspection. You regularly check that your improvement plan is having an impact on pupils' progress. At times, you have had to make some difficult decisions to ensure that the quality of teaching has continued to improve. You have managed to achieve this while maintaining high levels of trust between staff. You are very successful in maintaining a unity of purpose in upholding the values which are at the heart of the school's individuality. As a result, some of the areas for improvement identified previously are now strengths of the school.

Your senior and middle leaders share a common understanding of the characteristics of effective teaching. They use this to check on the impact of teachers' work regularly and systematically. You have provided the necessary training to help teachers improve the way they use assessment to set work which matches the needs of pupils. You have also insisted that teachers explain how pupils can improve their work in a way they can understand. As a result, these aspects of teaching, which were areas for development at the last inspection, are more effective in helping pupils make progress. However, you are aware that some of the most-able pupils need even more effective guidance to support their achievement in mathematics.

Leaders are effective in determining appropriate actions to help improve outcomes for particular groups of pupils. For example, boys in the early years have made more rapid progress in the current school year as a result of effective monitoring of teaching. However, you recognise that some middle leaders do not always focus sharply enough on using assessment information linked to the new curriculum when evaluating the impact of their work.

Pupils are passionate about the strengths which they see in the school's community. You have ensured that they can explain what the community stands for in impressively mature and sophisticated terms. They are in no doubt that they feel safe and benefit from improved opportunities to understand how to progress in their learning. Pupils have been taught how to keep themselves safe and understand why risks should be assessed rather than always necessarily avoided. Parents are supporting the drive to improve attendance. This has helped reduce absences so that rates of attendance are in line with national averages.

At the last inspection it was found that governors ought to play a more effective part in helping to shape the direction of the school. Governance has now improved so that it is a strength. Governors hold you fully to account by asking effective questions and interpreting school information skilfully. They understand their roles more fully. They keep their skills and procedures under regular review.

Safeguarding is effective.

You work closely with governors to make sure safeguarding policies are not only kept under regular review but also well understood and effectively implemented by all staff. You apply policies with the particular needs of individual pupils in mind. For instance, you have decided to provide a range of therapy sessions to support the emotional and social needs of some pupils. These are so successful that some pupils are able to now refer themselves for this support. This is a positive reflection of the confidence pupils have in the work of adults to keep them safe.

Leaders and governors are aware of the current issues in the wider community which may pose a risk to pupils. For example, governors have recently considered the steps the school should take to reduce the risk from radicalisation and extremism.

You make sure that any behaviour from pupils which is related to discrimination or bullying is swiftly tackled. As a result, the small number of pupils who have behaved this way in recent times have learned from their mistakes.

The school's premises are managed very effectively. The site manager keeps a close eye on any potential risks and insists that all staff and visitors know and follow safety procedures.

Inspection findings

- You accurately identify the attainment of pupils. This enables you to act swiftly and effectively when the progress of pupils slows. For example, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year dipped in 2015. Your early years leader has taken effective action to improve the progress of boys in particular. As a result, more than half of them have exceeded the progress expected of them this school year.
- The teaching of phonics and other early reading skills is effective and ensures that a higher proportion of pupils reach the expected level of ability in phonics by the end of Year 1 than seen nationally.
- The past two years have seen a transition in the way that pupils' progress in the curriculum is assessed. You have managed this well. However, some middle leaders do not always explain the impact of their actions on improving standards sharply enough.
- The improvements you have made to the quality of teaching have ensured pupils make consistently good progress throughout Key Stage 2. In 2015, every pupil made expected progress in reading and writing as did nearly all in mathematics. Over half exceeded this in reading and writing, as did nearly half in mathematics. This is because senior leaders have evaluated actions intended to improve the way teachers use assessment information accurately. It also results from the clear policies on teaching you have introduced. For example, the measures you have introduced to improve the guidance pupils receive when learning to write are implemented consistently well by all teachers.
- Your accurate self-evaluation has led leaders to identify the need to ensure more capable pupils are challenged to deepen their understanding of mathematical ideas and apply their skills better. You are right to be pleased with the impact of this work but realise that more needs to be done to ensure more pupils attain a higher level of mathematical understanding.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have continued to improve since the last inspection. More of these pupils attain the expected standard in the phonics check in Year 1 than is the case for other pupils nationally. By the end of Key Stage 2, disadvantaged pupils are typically less than three months behind others in the school and nationally, and attain better standards than disadvantaged pupils nationally. These pupils make the same good progress as their peers. This is due to the effective way leaders and governors monitor the effectiveness of the use of funding and focus on the way it is used to improve teaching.
- Pupils are very proud of what they believe the school stands for. They have a sophisticated understanding of the idea of the school as a community. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning in lessons and show kindness and consideration for one another when at play. Parents tell you that they have confidence in the ability of leaders and governors to keep pupils safe and improve the school further.
- Governors have made wise strategic decisions aimed at developing their capacity to challenge you in your pursuit of excellence. They have created their own plans

for improvement and monitored these closely. Governors have rightly focused on developing the conditions necessary to enrich discussion and increase participation. This has even extended to changing the shape of the table around which meetings are held.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the most-able pupils are given work which teaches them to apply their skills and deepen their understanding as soon as they are ready, particularly in mathematics
- middle leaders use assessment information gleaned from outcomes of the new curriculum to evaluate the impact of their work even more precisely.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for the London Borough of Hackney. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held discussions with you and other school leaders at both senior and middle leadership level. I met with one governor and had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body. I also met a representative of the local authority. I conducted a tour of the school, looking at pupils' work and observing their learning. I spoke to pupils in lessons and met with a small group of pupils to find out their views. I also spoke to a number of parents and considered the outcomes of a recent survey you conducted of parents' views. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey to take into account at this inspection.