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Mrs Deborah Albon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Albon

Short inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 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 May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

St Gregory's is a lovely, warm and welcoming school, where children are cherished and encouraged to become the best they can be. The cornerstone of this school is a real sense of shared community. The word 'family' is repeatedly used and, in fact, generations of families choose to send their children here.

You and other leaders, including governors, work tirelessly to identify where improvements can be made, because you want the absolute best for the children. As one pupil from the school council put it, 'It's really hard to think of things to improve because it's great as it is.'

You and your teachers have built on the strengths identified at your last inspection in May 2011 so that, for example, teachers' assessment practice remains strong and has a significant impact on the progress pupils make. Additionally, new strengths have emerged over the intervening five years. Your effective use of the primary sports funding, for example, now means that the vast majority of pupils participate in additional sporting activities, from dodgeball to gymnastics and boxing. This has increased their understanding of the importance of their own physical well-being.

At the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils have greater opportunities to develop their English, mathematical, and information and communications technology (ICT) skills across other subjects. You have acted on this very effectively. Pupils now apply their good writing skills across all subject

areas and develop aspects of mathematical learning, particularly in science. Since the last inspection, outcomes in mathematics have improved and pupils' writing skills have improved in their sophistication and accuracy. However, the progress pupils make in their learning to the end of Key Stage 1 is still not rapid enough. Given their starting points, more pupils should be exceeding age-related expectations by the end of this key stage than is currently the case.

You have effectively implemented, and communicated to parents, the requirements of the new National Curriculum and for assessing pupils' progress without the use of levels. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics and science. However, your plans for building progress in knowledge, understanding and skills in other subjects are not as well thought through. Consequently, the progress pupils make in subjects such as history, geography, art and technology is less clear.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety of pupils is a priority for everyone at St Gregory's. Staff, pupils and parents all agree that pupils are safe and are extremely well-cared-for. Attendance is improving to be above the national average and incidents of bullying are rare.

Governors ensure that the school continues to meet its statutory responsibilities, including the safe recruitment of staff. You record any child protection concerns carefully, and your follow-up action is swift, involving external agencies when it is appropriate to do so. A safeguarding committee, comprising you, the deputy safeguarding lead, a safeguarding governor, the caretaker and office manager, meets regularly to review the safety of the school site and to monitor the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding policy. This ensures that safety of staff and pupils remains an ongoing concern to everyone.

All staff and governors receive regular training in aspects of safeguarding. Recently, this has included training in keeping children safe from the dangers of radical extremism. They use training to keep parents informed of potential risks at home, such as through detailed sessions on e-safety. This ensures that everyone in the school community is alert to the risks children face.

Inspection findings

- You have established a culture of continuous improvement in the school. Consequently, there are some significant strengths in teaching practice and, from this, an improving trend in the progress pupils make in their learning, including in English and mathematics.
- Outcomes in reading are a particular strength, with many pupils becoming passionate readers. Novels and other stories and texts underpin the English curriculum and inspire pupils to become fluent, accurate writers. Outcomes in writing have been a relative weakness over the last few years, with fewer pupils exceeding age-related expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 than should be the case. However, you have taken strenuous action to address this. The school's current focus on encouraging pupils to draft,

reflect and edit their work is demonstrably improving the length, detail and execution of their writing.

- All staff concern themselves with the progress and well-being of each individual child. Consequently, there are very few gaps in the achievement of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs or disability. You have a determined focus on 'acting early', identifying as soon as possible the support that individual pupils might need. Dedicated staff provide weekly interventions, including before-school classes, reading support and holiday classes, to ensure any gains are not lost. This has led to some significant improvements in the achievement of individual pupils.
- The quality of teaching is a significant strength of the school. Teachers plan memorable learning experiences that pupils remember for weeks and months to come. As one parent said 'I cannot thank the hard working staff of the school enough for helping educate and shape my daughter into the sensible and intelligent individual she is today.' The tasks that teachers plan for pupils encourage them to remain focused, interested and talk excitedly about their learning, including when they are not directly supervised by adults. This is the case for youngest and oldest pupils alike.
- The behaviour of pupils is excellent. Routines are embedded early so children in the early years quickly develop into sensible, cooperative learners. Older pupils similarly adopt very positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in the quality of their work across all their subjects. The vast majority of pupils, parents and staff agree that behaviour is good at the school. Records show that serious incidents of misbehaviour are extremely rare.
- You do all you can to elicit the views of pupils so they can become active participants in school improvement. This ranges from councils to discuss aspects of the school's work, as happens, for example, in the sports council, to pupils being involved in deciding on topics they would like to study. Relationships between pupils are especially strong. For example, each Year 6 pupil has a 'buddy' in the reception class. They take responsibility for helping the youngest children to settle into and participate in school life. One parent related how this had a positive impact on her child's self-confidence and social skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards in writing, particularly by the end of Key Stage 1 and across the school, so that more pupils exceed their age-related expectations by the end of each key stage
- enable pupils to make secure progress in gaining the skills, knowledge and understanding they need, especially in history, geography, technology and art.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector visited a number of classes with the headteacher to observe English lessons and specifically the teaching of writing skills across the school. She scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and sampled other books, including from mathematics and the wider curriculum. The inspector spoke to pupils in class, at break and over lunchtime. She met with senior leaders to discuss the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness and to discuss arrangements for keeping children safe. She met with six governors and a representative of the local authority. The inspector took into account 27 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents), 16 staff questionnaires and 77 responses from pupils to their questionnaire. She scrutinised a range of documentation, including safeguarding records and curriculum information.