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Miss Sarah Griffin
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Miss Griffin

Short inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 June 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have created a strong school community where Catholic values are at the heart of the ethos for all pupils. As a result, strong partnerships exist between the local community and the diocese. An exceptionally high proportion of parents would recommend the school to other parents. Staff share the view that positive and purposeful relationships exist across the school. The school's motto, 'When you love to learn, you learn to love' promotes the qualities of tolerance and respect well. Consequently, pupils are enthusiastic about coming to school to learn. They talk positively about their learning and say they feel part of a caring community. Pupils have an awareness of different cultures and communities and understand how this is an important part of life in modern Britain. The religious ethos of the school helps shape pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils regularly participate in extra-curricular 'club night' activities, such as sport and performing arts, and enjoy trips, which enhance their learning.

Since becoming acting headteacher, you have wasted no time in working with your leaders to understand the performance of the school. Your evaluation of the areas of strength and those areas to improve is exceptionally accurate. You have not accepted the above-average pupil outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 as being the best possible. You and your leaders have taken steps to strengthen the quality of

teaching, learning and assessment across the school in order to improve on the good progress made by all pupils. As a result, middle leaders are now clear about their areas of responsibility. You have high expectations of them and are carefully and thoroughly monitoring their performance.

You rightly accept that the 2015 dip in expected performance in the Year 1 phonics (the link between sounds and letters) screening check is a matter for all staff to address. Consequently, the decision to provide language development support through the expertise of a speech and language therapist has supported well the progress children in the early years make. Furthermore, on entry to the early years, the starting points for children's learning are more accurately assessed so their needs can be better met. By the time children leave the Reception Year, the vast majority are well prepared for their next stage in learning.

Your staff have received effective training to incorporate the use of phonics in their Key Stage 1 teaching. Literacy has a focus for all pupils to develop technical language and deepen their writing skills. Regular reading is encouraged for older pupils who read confidently in class and apply their understanding of text well. You and your leaders are now focusing on developing mastery in mathematics, so that all pupils can make good or better progress.

The last inspection report referred to the need to ensure that pupils developed their writing skills and that teachers used assessment to meet the needs of all pupils. It is clear from looking in pupils' books, and from speaking to staff and pupils, that the development of literacy has received considerable attention. You have also supported your leaders to introduce a new assessment system to provide 'mastery' so that all pupils achieve their highest possible results in all years.

Your school has an engaging environment with well-maintained litter-free buildings. The atmosphere around the school is very calm. Pupils are courteous and polite with high aspirations. They participate well in effective play activities and work hard to achieve their goals. Pupils' attendance is above national expectations because they are proud of their school.

You and your governors are keen to ensure that the ethos to nurture and develop the love of learning continues. As a result, you have established strong support links with the local authority, the diocesan education commission, a national leader of education and partner schools. Therefore, a high level of expertise to improve the school further is available. The governing body is fully aware of its statutory duties. It has taken the decision to request an external evaluation of performance to strengthen its challenge to the school. Meetings of the governing body are well structured. Careful records are kept relating to governors' vision, oversight of the school and safeguarding. All governors receive regular training and they are well informed about the school's strengths. The Chair of the Governing Body is very clear that improvement is always possible. She shares a vision for the school to achieve even greater success. Governors regularly visit the school to monitor the progress of pupils and provide challenge to you and your leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding remains effective and meets current requirements. A clear culture to support pupils and protect them from risks is part of the caring community of the school. Staff receive regular training on a wide range of safeguarding issues to ensure that they fully understand the potential signs of abuse, neglect and any wider safeguarding concerns. The single central record for the recording of recruitment checks made on staff meets statutory requirements.

The designated safeguarding team has created a culture whereby a detailed safeguarding policy supports effective practice across the school. The team aims to support families where necessary before issues become significant and a matter of concern. As a result, early intervention through close parental support is encouraged. Leaders support the Catholic community through attendance at key events and this enables close contact to exist between the school and parents.

Detailed and well-maintained records are held about individual safeguarding cases when they arise. The designated officer works closely and effectively with her team and with the governor responsible for safeguarding. The team ensures that appropriate support is available through working closely with external agencies when following up concerns. Consequently, pupils know how to seek help and parents are supportive of the school's work to promote the personal development, behaviour and welfare of children. All the parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, the appointed leaders of the school are responding well to the areas for improvement. The acting headteacher and her management team have transformed the culture of leadership across the school. Middle leaders now promote higher expectations of pupils' achievement at all key stages. As a result, staff now have a closer focus on all pupils making better than expected progress in every year group. However, senior leaders and governors recognise that not all pupils achieve the highest possible results.
- Leaders have an astute and accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and those areas for further improvement. The leader's own evaluation of the school is exceptionally accurate. The acting headteacher understands that while Key Stage 2 pupils perform well, they could do even better. Furthermore, she is clear in her approach that through developing the depth of leadership, the school can reach an even higher level of success. This is a view shared by the governing body and those external partners who work with the school.

- Leaders continue to evaluate the curriculum. They have introduced steps to raise the performance of those children in the early years who are slow to achieve a good level of development, particularly in the development of social and communication skills. Consequently, a specialist speech therapist now supports the needs of children in the Reception Year before they undertake the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Leaders are incorporating 'mastery' into mathematics to extend those pupils who progress well in numeracy and for all pupils to use technical mathematical vocabulary. The development of literacy has already received considerable attention. As a result, pupils are able to read confidently in class. Many pupils at Key Stage 2 told the inspector they read widely for pleasure, particularly when encouraged to be 'free readers'. Furthermore, children in the early years were observed being enthusiastic narrators of the class story, *The Gruffalo*.
- Middle leaders have been supported to take wider responsibility for the progress pupils make in their subject areas. All have written evaluative action plans. The plans are clear and include steps to improve the outcomes for pupils. Staff are then expected to use the plans to inform their teaching. The recently introduced assessment system enables teachers to check carefully the progress all pupils make. As a result, the gaps between boys' and girls' reading skills have continued to be reduced. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability continue to achieve well. The majority make progress similar to their peers across the school.
- Pupils' achievement is not yet outstanding. Children in the Reception Year progress well from their starting points. However, in 2015, the number of children who achieved a good level of development was not as high as it should have been. Furthermore, a higher than expected proportion of children failed to achieve the expected standard in the phonics check in Year 1. Outcomes for Year 6 pupils remain high and are a strength of the school.
- Pupils work enthusiastically and with interest in lessons. They told the inspector that they enjoy receiving rewards and this helps them improve their written work in books. The majority of pupils present their work clearly and take pride in the way their books look. High expectations of pupils' behaviour is a strength across the school. Pupils respond positively to their teachers and any disruption is extremely rare.
- Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy attending school. They feel the school is a safe place to be. Any bullying incidents or racist behaviour are rare. No reported incidents have occurred over the last two years. Pupils are highly respectful and tolerant. They play well together and staff swiftly address any potential negative behaviour. Exclusions are extremely rare.

- Parents support the views of pupils. All the parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that the school looks after their children. Furthermore, those who spoke with the inspector at the start of the day said their children are happy at the school. Staff are proud to work at the school and they feel pupils are safe.
- The Chair of the Governing Body is committed to challenging leaders to improve the school's performance. She has a well-formed understanding of the school's relative strengths and its weaknesses. As the governor responsible for safeguarding, she ensures that the scrutiny of the single central record for recording recruitment checks made on staff is carried out thoroughly and regularly.
- The governing body performs its statutory duty. Its members set the headteacher targets and effectively oversee the arrangements for performance management and the impacts of the pupil premium and primary sports premium funding. Governors are well trained through external support and they regularly visit the school. They use their knowledge to challenge all leaders to account for the work of the school. However, the governors are self-reflective and share a desire to improve. Governors have commissioned an external review of the governing body to further its effectiveness in helping the school to better itself.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils make strong and accelerated progress from their starting points
- the depth of leadership at all levels is developed so that the school continues to sustain good or better outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Southwark and the Director of Children's Services for the London Borough of Bexley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lambern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector met with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders and teachers, including those responsible for safeguarding. He also met with a representative from the local authority and the diocese, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a national leader of education. The inspector spoke informally with pupils, parents and staff.

The inspector jointly visited a number of lessons during the day with leaders, gathering evidence on teaching, learning and assessment. He scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, minutes of the governing body meetings, information on the progress of pupils and the single central record of recruitment checks.