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Dear Ms Babb

Short inspection of St John's Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 April 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 February 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your ambition for the school is evident. As a result, the culture of this school is one of high expectations and ongoing improvement. You ensure that every pupil is known as an individual and is supported to achieve their best.

You have continued to improve teaching. Many children enter the early years with skills and knowledge below what is typical for their age. From their individual starting points, progress is strong, and this is reflected in the higher than national proportion of children at your school achieving a good level of development at the end of the early years. This figure has increased since 2013. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' outcomes have been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for the last three years. In 2015, a significant number of pupils, by the end of Year 6, made good or better progress from their starting points, so are well prepared for their move onto secondary school.

Pupils receive an education which is at least good at this school. They are rightly proud of their school and enjoy the exciting range of activities the staff organise, including BMX biking, sailing and dragon boat racing, and the many visits to museums, theatres or places of industry. You and your team believe in providing opportunities to inspire pupils in their learning and broaden future career choices, such as the recent visit to a national newspaper to find out first-hand about journalism and to reinforce the importance of fluency in writing.

The areas for improvement identified during the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Since the previous inspection, links have been made with another local school, which has resulted in the recently formed hard federation, which is providing opportunities for developing leadership capacity, particularly in governance and middle leadership. Governors and leaders are now using monitoring information well to identify how attainment and achievement can be improved and systems are in place to monitor the implementation of the school's marking policy. These were both areas identified for improvement at the last inspection.

At the previous inspection, inspectors judged that pupils' behaviour was outstanding and you have clearly maintained your focus in this area. However, you have rightly identified that overall attendance rates for pupils at the school are well below those of other schools and that this is an important area for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have continued to make sure that pupils are safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The site is a safe and secure environment because it is well maintained and because pupils move around the building appropriately, showing care for their environment. Detailed risk assessments are carried out, ensuring pupils' safety during off-site visits and activities. Incidents are logged and monitored, and records of correspondence kept.

Staff received training at the start of the academic year. They know about recent safeguarding guidance and what action to take should they have any concerns. Three key members of staff have completed the higher-level safeguarding training, demonstrating your commitment to keeping pupils safe. You know your pupils well, and work with other agencies to support pupils and their families. Pupils say they enjoy school, feel safe and that there is always an adult who they can talk to if something is worrying them or they need help. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- You and your staff across the school have a passionate commitment to ensuring that every pupil receives the support they need to help them excel. Leaders make careful checks to ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum is promoted which supports pupils' academic progress and social development.
- During our visits to classrooms we observed high levels of pupil engagement and learning. Pupils across the school confidently spoke about their learning, making links to other areas of the curriculum. They were rightly proud of the range of work in their 'learning outside the classroom' books and in their 'theme-based' books. In a Year 6 science lesson, pupils worked both cooperatively and independently, planning an investigation on friction. They were engrossed and their books showed a broad range of science activities undertaken since the start of the year.
- Governors are committed to ongoing school improvement. For example, the chair of governors regularly attends termly progress review meetings with

you, the local authority senior education advisor and your leaders for literacy, maths and the early years. As a result, governors are well informed of the strengths and areas for development. They have ensured that clear procedures are in place for dealing with concerns and have kept up to date with training on leading review panels.

- Middle leaders are involved in reviewing the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. They look at planning and the work in pupils' books and review assessment information. This is ensuring that timely interventions are put in place for pupils in need of additional support or to extend their learning further. For example, higher-achieving writers' groups are encouraging pupils to respond to more complex questioning and build on their ideas in writing of increasing length and quality.
- Consistency of expectation amongst staff through regular, clear guidance from leadership at all levels on planning, marking and feedback is ensuring that teachers know their pupils well. As a result, progress continues to be good or better, as demonstrated in the high-quality range of work in pupils' books.
- In the early years, children's beautifully presented learning journals accurately track children's achievements, recording their good or better progress through the early years. These journals collect important evidence about each child's learning and personal development using samples of work, photographs and both staff and children's comments.
- You and your leaders have very quickly identified where improvements are needed. Scrutiny of pupils' writing books confirms good progress. However, you are aware that grammar, punctuation and spelling are not consistently addressed early enough. You have recognised the need for further development in writing. You have taken action to provide training for staff from an external literacy specialist, which is supporting planning and assessment in line with the new national curriculum. As a result, teachers are developing their understanding of mastery and what this means for writing.
- Systems for monitoring and following up absence, including for those pupils who are persistently absent, are robust. The school appropriately challenges incidents of poor attendance with their parents. Successful interventions have led to some pupils making improvements in their attendance; however, it remains in the lowest 10% nationally for all primary schools. You are aware of the need to be unswerving in efforts to deal with persistent absence. You are also clear of the importance of finding additional ways of working with parents to support their child's attendance and monitoring the impact of these actions regularly.
- Staff are overwhelmingly proud to work at St John's and value the leadership, support and opportunities to develop their professional skills further.
- The local authority recognise that leadership is effective. They know how well the school is doing and provide good guidance and in-school support as needed. You are continuing to work within the federation and local authority to develop new systems for assessment and tracking.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of pupils improves and that additional ways of working with parents to support their child's attendance are developed, monitored and regularly reviewed
- teaching provides pupils with spelling strategies to support them with unfamiliar and everyday words.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Thwaites
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, teachers and staff. I met with a representative from the local authority, the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese. I considered the views of 57 parents as recorded on Parent View and the 21 questionnaires completed by pupils. I also considered the 22 questionnaires completed by members of staff. You and I visited classrooms together to observe pupils in their lessons and look at their work. I met with a group of pupils who shared the learning in their books with me. I spoke with pupils in classrooms and on the playground at breaktime. I met with parents on the playground as they brought their children to school and with those who had requested to see me individually. I scrutinised a range of documentation and records, including those related to keeping children safe. Account was also taken of leaders' evaluation of performance and school improvement priorities.