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Mrs Alexandra Healy
Headteacher
St Mary's Primary School, A Catholic Voluntary Academy
Pack Horse Lane
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Dear Mrs Healy

Short inspection of St Mary's Primary School, A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have made sure that the school remains good and is improving strongly. You have set high expectations for both staff and pupils and are driven to see every child reach their potential. This unwavering focus has meant that you have not been afraid to tackle underperformance over recent years.

You and other leaders know your school extremely well. You have an accurate understanding of what is working well and why. However, you and other leaders are not complacent and recognise that the school can be even better. You have sensibly selected priorities aimed at improving the school further. Teaching over time is good and continues to improve. Leaders are meticulous in checking the quality of teaching. Consequently, you have a really detailed understanding of each teacher's strengths and areas for improvement. Evidence over time shows that teachers receive high-quality support and guidance and so the quality of teaching continues to improve.

Pupil outcomes are improving year on year. More children are achieving a good level of development by the time they leave reception. Outcomes for pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 go from strength to strength and are consistently above national averages. You and your deputy headteacher have a forensic and detailed grasp of how well pupils are achieving. As a result of this you have rightly identified that more children in reception and certain groups of older pupils, including the most able and boys, could be making even better progress.

Some subject leaders, especially in English and mathematics, are experienced and confident in carefully checking pupils' progress. Consequently, these leaders can spot quickly which pupils may be falling behind and put in place strategies to rapidly and successfully tackle this. Other subject leaders are less experienced and are still finding their feet. As a result, their checks on pupils' progress are not sharp enough to spot when some pupils, including the most able and boys, are not challenged sufficiently.

Governors have a good understanding of how well the school is doing. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and use their experience well to ask challenging and pertinent questions of leaders. Effective systems and procedures are in place that allow governors to read reports in good time prior to their meetings. This helps them formulate key questions they wish to ask leaders. Governors recognise the need to keep a closer eye on how well pupils are progressing across the wider curriculum as well as making sure that the school's plans clearly state how additional funding will benefit pupils more.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have successfully created a culture of vigilance when it comes to keeping children safe. Parents are extremely positive about the caring and compassionate climate that you have developed within school. Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have about pupils, no matter what the issue. All staff take great efforts to make sure that pupils feel and are safe in school. Pupils say that they have every confidence that any worries they have will be listened to and dealt with. Detailed and thorough risk assessments are carried out prior to any trips and visits. Pupils' attendance levels are good and improving and the rates of persistent absence are low. Assemblies are used well to teach pupils about keeping safe when online, being tolerant and respecting others. You and other school leaders work well with other agencies in order to keep children safe. However, some multi-agency plans do not always contain clear or measurable targets. This makes it difficult to hold the school and other agencies and professionals to account for the difference they are making to improving vulnerable pupils' outcomes.

Inspection findings

- The curriculum is a real strength of the school. It provides pupils with numerous opportunities to develop their skills and talents, both in and outside lessons. Pupils enjoy tackling engaging and enjoyable enquiries in science, history and geography. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of after-school clubs, trips and visits. As a result, they are very well prepared for starting secondary school.
- Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to develop their leadership skills by being house captains, anti-bullying representatives, and faith and sports leaders. Pupils relish these additional responsibilities. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the importance of democracy and voting, due in part to recent school debates on whether the United Kingdom should remain in Europe.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and staff morale is high. Teachers and other adults establish very positive and productive working relationships with pupils. Lessons are calm and well-ordered and this helps pupils concentrate and make good progress.
- Children who did not achieve a good level of development in reception are now generally making faster progress in key stage 1. Through the use of effective interventions and support, this group of pupils are now better able to meet the challenges in Year 1 and 2.
- School leaders have benefited from a national leader of education visiting the school regularly. This has helped make sure that the school self-evaluation is accurate and priorities for further improvement are well chosen. School leaders are also using their skills and expertise to develop practice, especially in mathematics, across the wider locality.
- There are a plethora of support options available to newly and recently qualified teachers. This group of teachers feel very well supported and have benefited from visiting other teachers in school, and in other schools, to help them develop their behaviour management and assessment skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more children make faster progress in reception so that a greater proportion of them exceed the early learning goals
- all subject coordinators consistently check and improve the progress pupils are making, especially the most able and boys
- greater attention is paid to the progress pupils are making across the wider curriculum
- the school's plans, including multi-agency and additional funding plans, are refined further so that there are clear and measurable outcomes for what will be improved and by when.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, your deputy headteacher and your subject coordinators. I also met with a group of key stage 2 pupils, a group of governors, a national leader of education and an improvement partner from Learn Sheffield. Together with you and your deputy headteacher, we visited all classrooms to

observe teaching and look at pupils' work. Consideration was given to 39 free-text responses from the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and pupil and staff survey responses. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school self-evaluation document, the school development plan and your arrangements for checking the performance of teachers. I also reviewed documentation about how you keep pupils safe. The key areas I looked at during the inspection were how effective safeguarding arrangements are, the progress children make in reception and the progress pupils make across the wider curriculum in key stages 1 and 2.