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Ms Carolyn Duffy
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Duffy

Short inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your exceptional passion and ambition to provide the best for pupils in your care has led to pupils achieving high standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave school. In addition, your strong leadership and sharp focus on what could be even better has ensured that the school continues to meet pupils' needs well. You have instilled staff with confidence, drive and ambition. They, like you, are determined to improve the school further.

You have fully implemented the recommendations from the previous report. By working effectively with leaders and teachers, you have enriched the curriculum and improved teaching. As a result of providing the guidance, stimulation and encouragement they need to thrive, you have successfully improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Your key values of respect, aspiration, cooperation and reflection underpin all that you do. Pupils are well aware of how these link to the guiding principles that are embodied in British values. Pupils behave exceptionally well and are often genuinely enthralled by the work they do.

Your analysis of what the school needs to do next is accurate and well prioritised. You focus wisely on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils so that a higher proportion of this group reach the expected and higher standards by the end of key stage 1. You astutely concentrate on improving the quality of education by

ensuring that all teaching is sufficiently stretching and provides an exciting curriculum. You have provided good opportunities for pupils to immerse themselves in cross-curricular learning and have enhanced the range and quality of the subjects studied. These learning experiences have a positive impact on pupils' joy of learning. However, teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils develop and apply their key skills.

You have recently appointed new leaders, some of whom are more experienced than others. You rightly recognise that some leaders will need further development in order to make a deeper contribution to improving the school. You are developing their leadership skills by working with them closely and have successfully directed their work, which has made a positive impact on pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the development of the wider curriculum, especially subjects such as history and geography, has not been checked sufficiently through rigorous and well-planned monitoring activities. As a result, teachers' expectations in these subjects, and pupils' progress, are not as strong as in the core subjects of English and mathematics.

You have successfully improved the early years provision. Your early years leader is highly effective. She has ensured that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has improved year on year for the past three years and is now broadly average from starting points which are below average. Staff know each child's strengths and weaknesses very well and wisely monitor the choices children make in their play. Staff tailor the support they provide for each child effectively and encourage children to vary their play activities. A good example of this is the encouragement given to boys by providing activities that excite and inspire them in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Parents and staff say that pupils are safe in school and pupils agree. They know that you and your staff do all you can to keep them safe. You have ensured that staff are fully trained, including in their 'Prevent' duty, and that policies and procedures are fit for purpose. You have water-tight assurances that staff fully apprehend their safeguarding responsibilities. You have ensured that all safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. Of note is your insistence that staff record all concerns, no matter how small. This is so that you can piece together as full a picture as possible of each pupil and, where appropriate, make links between concerns. Pupils in need of protection are monitored carefully and outside agencies are used effectively to provide additional support when required.

Pupils learn how to be healthy and to keep themselves safe. Pupils described how visitors had told them about the dangers of talking to strangers, using the internet and crossing the road. They know that if they have a problem in school there is always someone who is there to help them and sort out any issues that arise. Pupils say bullying is rare but know that staff are vigilant and will quickly resolve their concerns. They know that senior leaders check any issues that are raised and act swiftly to address anxieties. You and your senior leaders make effective decisions to

use additional pupil premium funding, for example to support extra-curricular activities, including residential visits, for disadvantaged pupils. This has successfully increased their opportunities to learn and make better progress.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, you have continued to drive improvements with exceptional rigour, determination and commitment. Governors and staff strongly support your vision for the school to provide the best possible educational experience for your pupils. This is a close community school where leaders, staff, governors and parents all work together to achieve the best for the pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all that you and the staff do to care for and educate their children.
- Governors have a good understanding of their role and ask questions to clarify the work of teachers and leaders. However, governors' minutes indicate that governors do not always challenge and hold leaders to account. The school's evaluation of its effectiveness, and the action plans for school improvement, are rigorous. They sensibly link to pupils' progress, so leaders and governors can check whether the changes they have made have been effective.
- In reading, writing and mathematics, leaders check teaching carefully to identify what could be even better. They provide useful feedback, so teachers know what they need to do to become even better. Staff are held effectively to account by rigorous targets which link to pupils' progress. Consequently, all staff at the school know what they need to do for the school to become even better in these subjects. However, leaders are less rigorous in checking the progress that pupils are making in their topic work.
- Over a period of several years, pupils in key stage 2, including the most able and disadvantaged, have achieved better than pupils in other schools nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make rapid progress in key stage 2 because they are effectively challenged. Throughout the school, pupils' current work indicates that boys are performing as well as girls. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive additional one-to-one and group support, often from effective teaching assistants, and this ensures that they make progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively and make good progress. Pupils receive additional support to ensure that they are working at the same level as their peers. This has rightly been a focus for the school and has resulted in improvements, so their attainment is now broadly in line with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Leaders have sensibly taken action to increase attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which was below other pupils. Through their interventions and individual support, attendance for this group is now only marginally below average.
- Children in the early years are supported very well both before and when they arrive at the school. Staff know their interests and concerns well, so they provide the right support. There is a helpfully consistent approach to teaching early reading in Year 1 and Reception. The school has developed a more analytical

approach to the way adults use their assessments of children's skills. Teachers and assistants have a strong impact on developing children's crucial language and literacy skills as they play, for example by asking probing questioning. Consequently, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has risen consistently over the past three years to broadly match the national average.

- Teaching in phonics is strong. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics in the 2016 check was above average in 2016. The teaching of phonics is effective because it ensures that pupils have the opportunity to practise their blending and segmenting skills with unfamiliar, as well as familiar, words. The level of challenge in phonics is indicative of the high expectations teachers have of pupils' progress in key stage 1.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. The interesting and varied topics link usefully across subjects and are supported well by educational visits. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Pupils' work on the Holocaust, which involved meeting a survivor, and the empathy shown in their writing was particularly moving.
- Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Pupils listen attentively and are keen to learn. They have purposeful discussions about activities and remain on task for sustained periods of time. This is evident in the youngest classes through to Year 6.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the robust monitoring evident in English and mathematics is replicated in other subjects to be certain that teachers' expectations are consistently high, pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is accurate and their presentation is consistently neat and tidy.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Bywater
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with the headteacher, both assistant headteachers and the early years leader. I also met with the vice-chair of the governing body, another governor and a

representative of the local authority. I took into account the findings of a recent safeguarding report and a Diocesan inspection. I listened to pupils read and talked with a group about their views of school. I made short visits to lessons accompanied by senior leaders. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school and looked at pupils' books. I considered 20 responses from parents to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including some written comments. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, and safeguarding documents.