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Mr John Lane
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Primary School
Georges Road
Holloway
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Dear Mr Lane

Following my visit to the school on 10 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

With your skilful care and guidance, you have developed a highly effective senior leadership team whose members work alongside you to deliver strong outcomes for all pupils. You monitor and evaluate the learning in great detail and this has ensured that good standards have been maintained and strengthened since the last inspection.

It is clear that you have the full confidence of parents and staff. Your governors are knowledgeable, fully involved in the life of the school and work closely with you to maintain high expectations for all pupils.

Classrooms are inviting and attractive and the corridors are filled with colourful displays to reflect the rich diversity of the school. This makes pupils feel proud of their school and gives them a strong sense of belonging.

Strong pastoral care nurtures each pupil to become the best that they can be while showing care, consideration and courtesy to the needs of others. These values are deeply held across the school. You have worked well to address the recommendations of the last inspection and most-able pupils are now making good progress.

There is a true sense of community where each pupil is unique and highly valued. This makes for a calm and affirming learning environment as pupils feel safe and well cared for.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Child protection records are detailed and well kept. Leaders ensure that key events and issues are consistently recorded. This is a strong feature in the school's work to reduce risk to children.

Clear systems are in place for initial concerns and referrals. The school has close and effective partnerships with external agencies, including the local authority designated officer for safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- On visiting the classrooms, it was clear that you had reviewed the reading curriculum. Teaching showed a strong focus on the key areas of inference, deduction, mastery of vocabulary, rehearsal and pupils' responses to text. You had identified these issues from the 2016 reading test as areas in which pupils required further support. This work is currently being developed to ensure that there is a progression of skills in key stage 2.
- Across all year groups, there is a wide range of reading activities that support the development of comprehension skills. Pupils have access to high-quality reading material and this is introduced skilfully to extend pupils' reading choices.
- The teaching of phonics is consistent and effective in developing pupils' understanding of joining letters together to make sounds. Younger pupils are confident in using a range of decoding strategies in their reading. The most able readers display good expression, intonation and understanding of text.
- I also focused on the way the school tracks the progress of different groups of pupils. I found this to be effective. You had already identified through robust pupil progress meetings that middle-ability readers in key stage 2 required more support in the rehearsal of comprehension skills. You responded well to this through the development of the basic skills curriculum to offer pupils greater opportunities to discuss, reflect and respond to books.
- On the basis of your assessment information, you have provided additional support and intervention to girls in key stage 1 who are attaining below the expected standards. The impact of the additional support is showing improved outcomes in pupils' books.
- Pupils' progress in reading is tracked very carefully, and additional support and intervention strategies are widely available for less confident readers.
- I also looked in particular at pupils' attendance. The school has strong and effective strategies in place to monitor and improve attendance. The most recent data available suggested that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receiving support had higher absence and persistent absence than was the case nationally. My scrutiny of the school's detailed documentation showed clearly why this was the case.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further develop the reading curriculum through an ongoing focus on inference, deduction, mastery of vocabulary, rehearsal and personal response to text.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Islington. This letter will also be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tom Canning
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- what action the school is taking to ensure that all pupils achieve in reading
- what action the school is taking to track the progress of groups to ensure that all pupils make good progress
- how robust the tracking is of attendance and persistent absence for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and receive support
- how effective the school's safeguarding procedures are in ensuring the safety of all pupils.

The inspector carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection:

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and the school business manager.
- Teaching was observed jointly across the school alongside the school's senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body.
- A discussion was held with a representative from the local authority.
- A discussion was held with the school improvement partner over the telephone.
- Pupils from Years 2 and 6 were heard reading.

- A range of school documents, including the safeguarding records and policies, minutes of meetings of the governing body, attendance logs and a wide range of school policies, was scrutinised.
- A range of pupils' books was reviewed during lessons.
- Informal conversations were held with parents and carers at the beginning of the day.
- There was consideration of the responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, as well as responses from the online surveys for staff and pupils.