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Mrs Olivia Paton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Paton

### **Short inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 May 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You and your acting deputy headteacher provide clear direction, ensuring that other leaders remain focused on appropriate priorities for improvement. You use information well to identify when action is necessary and to evaluate the impact of your work. For example, you have reacted effectively in response to the unexpected dip in Year 6 reading results in 2016.

Governors ask astute questions based on an extensive knowledge of the school's work. They ensure that you are held closely to account and challenge you effectively. As a result, the school has acted decisively and promptly on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have encouraged a teaching culture where continuous reflection, high expectations and evaluation all help to maintain the good quality of teaching. These efforts have ensured that teachers challenge and support pupils to deepen their understanding and overcome barriers to learning.

You constantly strive to find ways to enrich the knowledge and skills of leaders and teachers. Your research work with another local school helps leaders understand how expectations of the quality of teaching can be raised even further.

You provide effective professional development for recently appointed leaders. For example, a system of 'shadow leadership' is developing middle leaders effectively. However, you recognise that the further development of middle leaders remains a priority because some of them are new to their roles. You are aware that sustained improvements to teaching depend on how well you develop the skills of middle leaders. You have secured improvements to the teaching of mathematics and reading. However, it is also apparent that some teachers do not routinely identify when pupils are ready to move on to harder work, particularly in mathematics.

You have also rightly recognised the need to ensure that communication with parents is improved. You have introduced new means of communication using the latest technology and provide more regular updates, which parents appreciate. This is helping you keep a closer eye on patterns in pupils' attendance and to act more promptly when a concern is identified.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You ensure that members of staff understand the procedures and expectations for reporting and recording concerns about the well-being of pupils. Any concerns are followed up promptly and referred to appropriate professionals when this is necessary. The records of checks on the suitability of staff meet requirements. Leaders and governors analyse information to identify risks and use this to decide on priorities for training. Pupils have a secure knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. They know how to identify possible risks to their safety and what steps to take to keep themselves safe from harm in a wide range of contexts.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry concerned pupils' reading. We agreed it would be important to consider current pupils' progress this year, including for the most able readers in key stage 2. Provisional national assessment results for Year 6 in 2016 suggest low attainment in reading, particularly on the part of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. You quickly identified the reasons for this and made improvements to provision for reading a key priority.
- My scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their reading show that leaders have been successful in improving reading outcomes overall and for most-able readers currently in key stage 2 classes. Teachers provide more effective guidance than in the past and help pupils infer the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary and understand challenging texts. Pupils said that they now use a dictionary and a thesaurus more confidently than before and find it fun to do so. The most able pupils discuss aspects of an author's style in a sophisticated way. For example, pupils explained to me how authors imply meaning in fictional texts, and gave me examples to illustrate their explanations. Assessment records show that a greater proportion of pupils currently in key stage 2 make strong progress in reading.

- I also considered your work to improve pupils' knowledge of phonics. Over the last three years, assessment information shows that the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attain the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 has risen and is now similar to the national average for other pupils.
- Teachers in the early years and key stage 1 support children and pupils in learning basic reading skills very effectively. They have strong subject knowledge and provide creative activities which make learning enjoyable and promote pupils' rapid progress. You work effectively to ensure that parents understand how you teach reading and encourage them to help their children to read at home. Pupils' reading logs show that parents regularly listen to their children read at home. The pupils who read to me were very confident and used their knowledge of phonics accurately.
- I also considered the impact of leaders' work to improve the progress of pupils in using and applying their mathematical skills. You decided to make this another priority for improvement after identifying recent inconsistencies in pupils' progress. Your main focus has been on improving teaching strategies aimed at enabling pupils to master mathematical skills and explain their reasoning.
- Pupils' work over time shows that they are growing in confidence and accuracy when challenged to solve mathematical problems. I spoke with selected most-able pupils in key stage 2 about their work. They showed me how teachers' guidance was helping them write explanations with increasing detail and precision. For example, pupils in Year 4 explained how a graph showed a river's water level changing over time and linked it to inferences about why this might happen. In some classes, however, work in pupils' books shows that pupils repeat calculation work that they already understand because teachers do not provide more demanding work soon enough.
- In 2016, there was a dip in the school's previously average attendance rates. Your sharply focused efforts to improve attendance have reduced absence to a level similar to the national average in the current year. You recognise that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains weaker than that of other pupils. However, your efforts to diminish these differences are working and are improving the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers identify more precisely and promptly when pupils are ready to try more difficult work in mathematics
- the development of the skills of middle leaders continues so that they have an even greater impact on sustaining improvements to the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Following discussions with school leaders, we agreed on the following lines of enquiry during the inspection:

- the effectiveness of action taken to improve rates of pupils' progress in reading in key stage 2, particularly for the most able, and the most able disadvantaged pupils
- the impact of additional funding on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in phonics by the end of Year 1
- the impact of school leaders on the pace of pupils' progress through key stage 2 in mathematics
- the work of leaders to improve pupils' attendance, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- how effectively leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are well understood and training keeps staff up to date with current guidance.

I held discussions with senior and middle leaders about their work. I spoke to representatives of the governing body and had a conversation with two representatives of the local authority. I visited classes with senior leaders. I heard selected pupils of different abilities read and looked at a range of pupils' work. I scrutinised documents related to safeguarding and school improvement. Responses to Parent View, Ofsted's survey for parents, were taken into account, together with some written responses.