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Mr Damian Davey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Davey

Short inspection of Boston St Mary's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has undergone significant staff changes since the last inspection, including a change of headteacher. You have made astute appointments to strengthen the leadership. You are a reflective and supportive leader and utilise the expertise of other leaders effectively.

Your relatively new leadership team knows the school's strengths well and has correctly identified the areas for development. The comprehensive school improvement plan coherently identifies the actions required to ensure that standards continue to improve.

The school's values of love, hope, truth, mercy and peace are clearly displayed around the school and are shared during school assemblies. Pupils know and understand the meaning of these values and keenly shared their understanding during the school's collective worship. Pupils are part of an inclusive school and know that the value of love is shown through welcoming new pupils, showing respect and caring for each other. For example, pupils told me that the playground buddies care for younger pupils during playtimes and help them to play and develop their social skills.

Since the last inspection the school has focused upon sharing best practice with teachers to ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching and learning across the school.

Some teachers have delivered demonstration lessons and staff have had training to refresh teaching and learning approaches in the classroom. You have also welcomed external support from a local outstanding school to improve the provision in the early years, and engaged with local headteachers who provide support as critical colleagues. You acknowledge that the capacity of the new leadership team will enable you to further develop the coaching skills of teachers across the school.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to use assessment information to set work that is closely matched to pupils' abilities and needs and make sure that all parts of the lesson engaged and challenged pupils. During our tour of the school, I saw a range of evidence to confirm that you have addressed this. The work in pupils' books shows that pupils' written work is of a good standard and the tasks set by teachers meet their specific needs. Teachers are using a new curriculum framework to support the delivery of lessons. Using this new framework has enabled teachers to track pupils' learning carefully and ensure that any gaps in learning are addressed. I observed pupils who were enthralled by the teacher's description of 'death' linked to the plague topic. Pupils enthusiastically spoke of biting fleas and how this quickly spread the plague among a community.

You have made headway to improve levels of whole-school attendance through the appointment of a home school liaison officer. He monitors attendance closely and emphasises the importance of pupil attendance through regular meetings with parents and home visits. The school is now meeting the national average for attendance. However, you rightly acknowledge that more work needs to be done to ensure that levels of persistent absence reduce, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils eligible for free school meals.

The school has correctly identified the need to increase the proportion of pupils achieving a higher standard by the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. You also acknowledge that the proportion of middle-ability boys reaching the expected standard in reading and writing is below the national expectation.

You also recognise that school communication needs improving for all parents and particularly those parents who speak languages other than English, as the range of languages has increased significantly in recent years.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have effective partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies. This has helped to ensure that pupils are supported and kept safe. Safeguarding training for staff and governors is up to date and governors make thorough checks on all safeguarding practices. Staff know precisely what to do in the event of a safeguarding concern. They have all of the information and guidance they need to provide the necessary support for pupils in their care.

High-quality and detailed records show that you manage concerns swiftly and

understand the procedures for referring pupils, where there is a concern. You are prompt and vigilant in garnering further support by approaching the appropriate external agency.

Pupils feel safe at the school and are confident that their concerns are quickly dealt with by staff. They know precisely how the school keeps them safe, through site security and the need for visitors to wear specific identity badges during their school visit. Pupils said bullying is rare and they feel assured that teachers will deal with any concerns that they may have promptly.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 was in line with national expectations. However, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth was below national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. You have rightly acknowledged that this needs addressing. You have recently appointed an English leader and mathematics leader to address this. Leaders are continually assessing pupils to ensure that their specific needs are being addressed through effective teaching and learning in the classroom.
- You acknowledge that the proportion of middle-ability boys reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 is below the national expectation, particularly in reading and writing. You have introduced a new curriculum framework to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. It includes fun and innovative topics of learning, such as superheroes and dinosaurs. Consequently, pupils, and particularly boys, are highly engaged and motivated to learn. However, more time is needed to assess the impact of this new initiative on middle-ability boys' outcomes at the end of key stage 1.
- Leaders recently introduced a new phonics programme to support the teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1. In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 was in line with national expectations.
- You have established a thorough system for tracking pupils' progress at key points throughout the year. As a result, you are able to monitor the progress of all groups of pupils very carefully. Regular meetings enable teachers to discuss pupils' progress thoroughly to ensure that their needs are being met.
- The school has a diverse community and the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well through the appointment of a bilingual teaching assistant. You recognise that further work needs to be done by the school to ensure that all forms of communication meet the needs of all families and particularly those who speak languages other than English.
- The governing body provide effective support and challenge. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and know what needs to be done so that all pupils receive the best provision possible. The governing body regularly checks on the work of the school. Governors are aware of the school's priorities and the actions needed for the school to make further improvements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 meets national expectations
- the proportion of middle-ability boys reaching the expected standard in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 meets national expectations
- the levels of persistent absence reduce, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those pupils eligible for free school meals
- the work of the school is better communicated to parents, particularly parents who speak English as an additional language.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Nuttall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, who is also responsible for safeguarding, and other senior leaders. I also met with the vice-chair of the governing body and the chair of the curriculum and standards committee.

I visited a series of lessons with the headteacher. I examined samples of pupils' work and talked to pupils about their work. I spoke with pupils informally during breaktime and lessons, and formally during an interview.

I observed pupils' behaviour around the school at the start of the day, at breaktimes and during lessons. I met with parents at the beginning of the school day and I took account of 14 responses to the Ofsted free text service and 50 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff survey or pupil survey. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, including the single central record, behaviour policies, the latest achievement information for the school, the school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plan, records of meetings of the governing body and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.