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Mr Andrew Krlic
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Krlic

Short inspection of St Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, senior leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school, 'The St Peters' Way', which promotes high expectations of pupils and their learning. You have continued to ensure that pupils achieve well, and although you were disappointed with the dip in standards for writing at key stage 2 in 2016, you and your leaders have acted swiftly to address this. Rapid improvements in writing are clearly noticeable because of the effective strategies you have introduced. However, you rightly acknowledge that these strategies for challenging pupils to reach higher standards need to be consistently and firmly embedded if pupils are to reach the standards they are capable of, especially for those pupils who are most able.

A strong sense of 'togetherness' pervades the school. Relationships between staff, and between staff and pupils, are particularly strong and respectful. Teachers learn from each other and are receptive to new ideas. You, your leaders and your teachers continually look for ways of improving teaching and as a result the quality of teaching is improving. Mathematics is a real strength because of the very effective leadership of the subject and the challenging and engaging learning activities that pupils complete. Consequently pupils make exceptional progress in mathematics.

The younger pupils in the school have a good understanding of the sounds letters make and are able to blend these sounds together to read simple words. However

you rightly acknowledge that a minority of less able pupils are not making progress quickly enough, which is delaying their early reading skills.

The previous inspection challenged you to improve teaching so that pupils apply their reading, writing and speaking skills to different subjects and that teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to achieve through better explanations. A strong feature of lessons is the collaboration and cooperative attitude pupils have towards each other. They share ideas and talk openly with others about what they are learning, particularly when problem solving in mathematics. You and your leaders have also ensured that standards in writing are maintained in all subjects, and inspection evidence supports this. Through your monitoring of teaching and subsequent support for teachers, explanations of what pupils are expected to learn are now clear and concise. During lessons pupils were able to explain precisely to me what they were attempting to achieve in their learning.

Recommendations from the previous inspection also urged leaders to take a more thorough approach to checking the quality of teaching and to see that better use is made of assessment information in the early years. You and your leaders have adopted rigorous and highly effective procedures for monitoring teaching. Teachers are both supported and challenged to improve their practice and as a result good-quality teaching is evident throughout the school. Your recently appointed early years leader has developed very good systems for assessing children's progress and identifying next steps in their learning. There is a strong sense of partnership between the early years staff and parents that results in accurate assessments of what children are achieving and what they need to learn next.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and meticulously kept, including records of the checks on adults working in the school. Staff training is up to date and includes training on female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and recognising the signs of radicalisation and extremism.

Staff are clear about the school's systems and what to do if they have any concerns over children's welfare. There are good links with external agencies including social services, the police and the local general practitioner. Clear channels for recording and following up any child protection issues are in place and you are tenacious in your determination to ensure pupils are safe and that nothing is left to chance. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are well cared for and pupils say they feel safe.

Inspection findings

- You and your leaders are dynamic and driven by a strong desire to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils in the school. You are strongly supported by an effective governing body that share the same desire, and in unison you form a highly effective leadership team.

- You have created a real sense of community in the school. Teachers are keen to learn and are open to ideas to improve their practice. You and your leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning very robustly to drive improvements further, and your teachers readily share good practice through their support of each other.
- Following the key stage 2 results in 2016, you reviewed and developed the teaching of writing to positive effect. You have ensured that pupils, and especially the most able pupils, are effectively challenged. You have achieved this by raising the expectations of what pupils can accomplish and ensured that lessons are challenging and engaging for pupils. During the inspection pupils were keen to share their achievements in writing with me and could speak confidently about what they had learned. As a result standards in writing are improving and you quite rightly recognise that high standards will only be attained if current good practice is firmly embedded and sustained.
- Mathematics is exceptionally well led and the school has several teachers with specialisms in the subject. As a result outcomes are excellent both in published information and evidence collected during the inspection. Mathematics lessons have a real 'buzz' about them and pupil engagement is exceptionally high because pupils are excited about the problem-solving activities they are completing.
- The most able pupils read with fluency, confidence and expression. They have good comprehension skills and speak confidently about the books they are reading, including some quite demanding classic literature. Less able pupils mostly use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to read unfamiliar or difficult words.
- School leaders have gone some way to address the need to improve provision for, and pupils' understanding of, phonics, by restructuring how it is taught. You and your leaders review phonics groups regularly to ensure learning activities are pitched at the appropriate level. As a result the provision for phonics is mostly good. However, a minority of the younger less able pupils lack a basic understanding of the sounds letters make, or the ability to blend them together to form simple words, because the provision they receive is not consistently good.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent strategies to improve writing outcomes are firmly embedded so that pupils, particularly the most able, achieve standards they are capable of
- provision for phonics is improved further so that the less able pupils make rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Alan Chaffey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, senior leaders, other staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I took account of the 32 free text opinions from parents, 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and letters from parents submitted during the inspection. No pupils responded to the pupil survey and there were no responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I talked to pupils informally during breaks and lessons and I listened to several pupils read. I visited lessons with you to observe learning in progress and examined pupils' work in their books with you and your senior leaders. I considered a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and current attendance records.

In particular I focused on the impact of leaders' actions to improve standards in writing, especially for the most able pupils, and the quality of teaching for mathematics. I also looked at the quality of teaching for phonics in key stage 1.