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Alexandra Stacey
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stacey

Short inspection of Westminster Cathedral RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 previous inspection. Outcomes for pupils, particularly at key stage 2, have slipped over the last two years. Since your appointment as the acting headteacher in September 2016, you have wasted no time and have addressed this issue with rigour and promptness.

There has been a vast improvement in standards at the end of the early years. The early years is a clear strength of the school. Over the last few years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased. In 2016, the proportion was well above the national average. Children acquire the basic skills and emotional resilience necessary for their learning in key stage 1. Also in 2016, the proportion of pupils, including the disadvantaged, who met the expected standard in the phonic screening check was well above average.

The previous inspection report identified the need to strengthen pupils' writing skills across the curriculum. Leaders have successfully addressed this by prioritising writing within the curriculum. You have provided effective training for teachers on how to teach grammar and spelling. Consequently, teachers' subject knowledge and confidence have increased. Additionally, parents have received workshops on grammar and spelling so they can support their children's learning. This provides good continuity for pupils.

A school improvement board has been set up to improve outcomes for pupils comprised of school leaders, governors and a local authority representative. You are

ambitious and determined to move the school forward and raise standards further. Staff are aware of and fully supportive of your vision for the school.

Since the last inspection there has been a significant turnover of staff. There have also been new appointments at middle leadership. Your evaluations of the quality of teaching over time show that much of the teaching is good or better. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils, across the school, are making typically good progress in writing and mathematics. Pupils read confidently and accurately. Pupils typically read challenging books. When they come across new and more difficult words, they use their knowledge of letters and sounds to accurately break the words down.

Pupils are true ambassadors of the school. They are extremely polite, respectful and well-mannered. Pupils say they feel safe at school. They are knowledgeable about different types of bullying and know how to stay safe online. Pupils, should they need to raise any concerns, have the confidence and trust to approach adults in school.

Most parents are positive and appreciate leaders' work. You are committed to further strengthening partnerships with parents. You have identified this as a priority in the school's improvement plans and would like parents and carers to become more involved in school life. You have rightly identified that a further priority for the school is to improve outcomes in science. You have also put in place the correct actions that will improve attendance, particularly for pupils who receive free school meals.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust and fit for purpose. The pre-employment checks on the suitability of adults to work with children meet statutory requirements. Leaders keep detailed records of concerns and referrals made to the local authority, including child protection plans. Staff are well trained to notice any changes in pupils' behaviour. They understand their roles in protecting pupils from the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation.

Inspection findings

- I evaluated the actions leaders are taking to accelerate pupils' progress in writing at key stage 2, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This was because the provisional assessment information for 2016 showed that pupils' progress in writing was below others nationally.
- Leaders have taken effective action to raise standards in writing across the school. For example, pupils are involved in writing projects that are linked to high-quality children's texts. External professionals lead these writing projects. These projects have been successful. For example, pupils, particularly boys, are enthused and motivated to write.

- We jointly scrutinised pupils' written work across a range of subjects. The work in pupils' books, including for disadvantaged pupils, shows that pupils use their writing skills well in a range of contexts, for example in religious education and history topics. Most pupils are writing within the standard expected for their age. Teachers routinely encourage pupils to correct their spelling. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in their writing.
- I explored the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve pupils' outcomes in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2. Test results in 2016 showed that attainment at the end of key stage 1 was below average. They also showed that overall progress in mathematics, including for disadvantaged pupils was below other pupils nationally.
- Leaders support class teachers to plan learning activities, ensuring that a wide range of mathematical topics are taught. As a result of good continuous professional development, teaching in mathematics has improved. Teachers routinely identify the gaps in pupils' learning and promptly offer interventions and support to address these. Pupils use their mathematical skills well to solve problems and explain their reasoning. Pupils are given additional challenges to extend and apply their mathematical skills. As a result of improved teaching, all groups of pupils are now making good progress in mathematics.
- I considered the actions leaders are taking to ensure that pupils make good progress in science and other subjects. The 2016 provisional assessment information indicated that pupils' attainment in science at key stage 2 was not as strong as key stage 1. At key stage 1, overall outcomes in science are close to the national average.
- Leaders have developed a creative curriculum that provides pupils with opportunities to apply their mathematical and literacy skills to other subjects, such as science and history. The work in pupils' science books indicates that pupils are gaining scientific skills and knowledge. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to scientific investigations to deepen their understanding further. Although leaders have introduced new assessment tasks to check pupils' progress in science, teachers are not consistently using these tasks to assess pupils' progress.
- Although overall attendance has improved over the last two years, I explored the actions leaders are taking to improve attendance for particular groups of pupils. A learning mentor has been appointed since September 2016 to work closely with families. This is having a positive impact. For example, overall attendance is now close to the national average. However, the attendance of boys, pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently use the school's assessment tasks for science to check the progress pupils have made in their learning
- pupils are given more opportunities to carry out scientific investigations so that they can apply their scientific knowledge and skills
- the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals, boys, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improves towards that of all pupils nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Rajeshree Mehta
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- jointly scrutinised pupils' work in English, science, mathematics and topic books
- made visits to lessons in key stages 1 and 2 to observe learning
- talked to pupils about their learning during visits to lessons and at lunchtime
- listened to pupils reading in Year 2 and Year 6
- held meetings with school leaders and members of the governing body
- held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority
- informally met with parents at the start of the school day
- analysed 24 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents
- considered 20 responses from the online staff questionnaire
- scrutinised documentation including: the school's self-evaluation; the school's improvement plans; minutes of the school improvement board; pupils' attendance information; documentation related to safeguarding; the school's assessment and behaviour information; and minutes of the governing body meetings.