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22 March 2017

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Dear Miss Nugent

Short inspection of English Martyrs Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 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 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 and your governors have recently re-structured the senior leadership team in order to further develop and retain high-quality staff. The new senior leadership team has a good understanding of the challenges facing this small inner-city school. The increased number of pupils entering the school who speak English as an additional language, along with the increased standards of the national curriculum in English and mathematics, has led you to develop your teaching methods so that pupils reach higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics and are taught the literacy skills to succeed.

You and your senior leadership team have worked hard to secure new teachers for the school following a period of high staff turnover. You have maintained your high expectations for the calibre of teachers required to challenge and support pupils. You have wisely recruited teachers with experience of teaching English as an additional language to help meet pupils' needs, particularly those who join the school from other countries.

At the time of the last inspection, the inspectors recognised many strengths in the school, including pupils' excellent behaviour and the school's high standards of safety. They also identified a need to ensure that the most able pupils are always challenged, the outdoor area of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) is developed, leaders share their findings about the quality of teaching and learning systematically with governors and staff, and subject leaders should complete action plans setting out how

the school's key priorities relate to their areas. Leaders have effectively addressed these recommendations so that:

- the outdoor area of the EYFS enables children to learn effectively
- you and your leaders share appropriate information about the quality of teaching and learning with staff and governors. Further training is planned to enable staff and governors to support the school in analysing the progress of different groups of pupils more precisely
- your subject leaders' action plans effectively relate to the schools' key priorities helping to improve the consistency of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure and based on current statutory guidance. Pre-employment checks are carried out effectively. Staff are kept up to date with training and briefings on national priorities. School leaders do not shy away from tackling any concerns about safeguarding. Procedures for reporting and recording concerns are detailed and timely. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Pupils' needs are well met, because leaders work thoroughly with external agencies and parents.

Pupils say they are happy, safe and know they can turn to a member of staff at any time if they have any worries. Parents comment on the good behaviour of pupils and staff going out of their way to support families. This contributes to a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

Inspection findings

- I explored the progress and attainment of middle and high prior attaining pupils in writing, which you had identified as a key area for improvement for the school. This is because leaders are ambitious to ensure that more pupils in key stage 2 make more than expected progress from their starting points at the end of key stage 1.
- You have put in place a number of measures to ensure that current pupils make better progress. You have introduced a new tracking system, and now staff have a better understanding of pupils' rates of progress. However, due to the newness of the system you know that teachers are not yet using it as effectively as they could be.
- Work with colleagues in other settings has increased teachers' confidence in their own moderation of their already high standards. As a result, more pupils are on track to exceed expected standards in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2.
- You have made sure that teachers are more accountable for the progress of pupils in their class and they adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs.
- We looked at books together and saw some well-crafted writing, with higher attaining pupils demonstrating very good use of complex language structures while writing for a range of purposes. Teachers' guidance to pupils was effective in

helping them to improve their writing through editing and re-working sentences to greater effect.

- I also focused on how well the school is developing teaching in English, particularly the use of vocabulary. We agreed that some of your pupils, especially middle- and some higher-attaining pupils, could make more rapid progress if they had a wider knowledge of English vocabulary and the complex meanings of words.
- There are frequent opportunities for pupils to read widely and often. Consequently, progression in comprehension skills is evident in pupils' books.
- Finally, I considered how leaders ensure that pupils leaving the EYFS achieve the expected level of development and are effectively challenged to reach the higher standard at the end of KS1 in reading.
- Teachers have received useful training to support pupils' reading and writing skills development. Teachers have identified pupils whose reading needs to be more secure and they hear them read regularly. We observed guided reading lessons, where teachers skilfully questioned pupils about the meanings of new words. Pupils further develop their understanding of these words by experimenting with new sentences. They are confident when using dictionaries and the thesaurus to find better or equivalent words, which improves their writing.
- Leaders deploy additional teachers effectively to work with small groups of pupils on their reading and comprehension skills. They skilfully rehearse the use of new language with pupils, and take time to unpick the nuances of meaning before lessons. As a result, middle-attaining readers are confident and keen to read aloud to their peers or adults.
- There is a wide selection of books in each classroom, and you have recently invested in the refurbishment of your school library. Pupils enjoy borrowing books, and experience reading in a calm and inspirational environment.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's assessment system is further developed so that teachers, leaders and governors can analyse pupils' progress more precisely enabling teachers to target interventions even more effectively
- the current high quality of staff training continues to support and achieve consistency in the teaching and learning of reading and writing across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Brinkley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector carried out the following activities to explore the lines of enquiry during the inspection:

- held meetings with you and other senior leaders
- met the chair of the governing body and four other governors
- held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority
- met with the coordinator responsible for English and the assessment leader
- analysed 47 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey
- considered the views of 11 staff and 98 pupils who took part in the Ofsted online surveys
- short visits to lessons in all year groups jointly with the headteacher
- with senior leaders, looked at pupils' books in lessons, and in detail at pupils' writing books from Years 2, 3 and 6
- spoke to a group of pupils from key stage 2
- listened to Year 2 pupils read during their guided reading lesson.