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Mrs Bernadette Smith
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School
St Mark's Road
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment as substantive headteacher in April 2015, you quickly raised aspirations for the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. You ensure that teachers share your high expectations and strive to bring out the best in every pupil. Despite turbulence in staffing, you have remained focused on ensuring that the school provides a good standard of education.

You and your deputy headteacher form an effective team. Together, you are quick to identify and tackle aspects of the school's work that need strengthening. Your drive for improvement has been underpinned by a more rigorous approach to the performance management of teachers. They are now held to account fully for the quality of their teaching and the impact it has on pupils' outcomes. This has transformed the way teachers think about their practice. They now reflect carefully on how to adapt their teaching in order to maximise how well pupils learn. Bespoke support ensures that newly qualified teachers get a strong start to their career. They particularly value the way leaders provide them with clear targets and work alongside them to improve their practice.

Effective teaching has ensured that pupils make strong progress in reading and mathematics. In the 2016 key stage 2 assessments, pupils' progress in reading was significantly above the national average. As a result, pupils' attainment was above average, with one in three Year 6 pupils achieving the high standard. In mathematics, Year 6 pupils made good progress overall and also attained standards that were above the national average. This pattern of strong achievement in

reading and mathematics is also evident in key stage 1. However, pupils' progress in writing was slow, both in key stages 1 and 2. You and your deputy have analysed carefully the reasons for this underachievement. Your actions to speed up pupils' progress in writing are proving to be successful. However, there is still further work to do to ensure that all pupils achieve to the very best of their capabilities in writing.

Together with the deputy headteacher, you have strengthened the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. You have an in-depth understanding of their individual barriers to learning. As a result, additional support is well matched to pupils' needs. You evaluate the impact of this support carefully to ensure that it helps these pupils learn and achieve as well as their peers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular training on different aspects of safeguarding. They are aware of the different signs that can indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. This includes signs that a pupil may be at risk of radicalisation, female genital mutilation or neglect. Leaders ensure that staff are clear about how to record and report concerns. Records are detailed and of high quality. They show that staff are vigilant and take action promptly when they are worried about a pupil's welfare. Leaders know individual pupils well. They work sensitively with parents to ensure that pupils' needs are assessed thoroughly. Where necessary, leaders seek advice from external agencies, including the local authority's Early Help service. As a result, vulnerable pupils and families receive help and protection promptly.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They told inspectors that there is always an adult available to help them sort out any issues or worries. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in Year 6 described how to use the 'stop, look and listen' rule when crossing the road. They could also describe how to use the internet sensibly and safely.

Inspection findings

- For my first line of enquiry, I considered pupils' achievement in writing. In the 2016 writing assessments, Year 6 pupils made slower progress than other pupils nationally. This was also the case in key stage 1, with fewer pupils attaining the expected standard when compared to other pupils nationally.
- I found a sharp focus on improving pupils' outcomes in writing across the school. Teachers' questioning and explanations help pupils to make careful choices of the vocabulary and language features they use in their work. As a result, pupils write confidently in different styles, including non-fiction and poetry. This is evident in pupils' books as well as the wide variety of writing on display. In Year 6, pupils 'publish' their work in special books. The standard of this writing is high, with pupils taking great care over their presentation and handwriting.
- Effective teaching ensures that pupils develop a good knowledge of English grammar and punctuation. In 2016, Year 6 pupils attained above-average

standards in the national grammar, punctuation and spelling test. However, you identified that pupils were not always using their knowledge to record their ideas accurately. In the key stage 2 writing assessments, although pupils' ideas and vocabulary were well developed, their use of punctuation, grammar and spelling skills was inconsistent. This prevented a greater number of pupils from achieving the expected standard.

- You have taken swift action to tackle this. Leaders have introduced writing 'non-negotiables', which set out the grammar, punctuation and spelling skills expected in each year group. Pupils use these 'non-negotiables' to routinely edit their work, correcting errors and making improvements by themselves. As a result, the quality of their writing is improving. However, in some year groups teachers do not expect pupils to use these 'non-negotiables' when they are writing in their science and topic work. Consequently, they are still making basic errors in their use of punctuation and grammar. This is reducing the overall impact of leaders' work to accelerate pupils' progress in writing.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance identified that insufficient emphasis has been given to the development of pupils' handwriting skills. Leaders have ensured that there is greater rigour in the way handwriting is taught, particularly in the early years and key stage 1. Teachers have higher expectations and ensure that pupils form letters correctly. This approach is leading to swift improvements. By the time they reach Year 2, the majority of pupils have developed a fluent, cursive handwriting style. However, in key stage 2 pupils with low prior attainment still struggle to form and join their letters accurately. You recognise that this is a barrier to these pupils producing writing at the standard expected for their age.
- For my second line of enquiry, I considered the work of subject leaders to improve outcomes for pupils. Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness identified that this aspect of leadership needed strengthening.
- I found that subject leaders are developing the necessary skills to contribute effectively to your drive for continuous improvement. You ensure that they are clear about the school's current priorities as well as the action they need to take to address these areas. Visits to lessons and scrutinies of pupils' books help subject leaders to check the quality of teaching. They are also beginning to use assessment information to identify aspects of the curriculum that need strengthening. However, they do not routinely measure whether their actions are speeding up pupils' progress and raising standards. You were clear that this aspect of their work needs further development.
- For my third line of enquiry, I explored whether leaders are taking effective action to reduce absence rates for different groups of pupils. Last year, pupils' attendance was broadly in line with the national average overall. However, absence rates for disadvantaged pupils were above the national average.
- Your approach to improving attendance is rigorous. Concerns are identified quickly and are followed up through letters and meetings with parents. Where appropriate, you involve the local authority's education welfare service to support this work. Effective partnerships with families have helped leaders to 'unpick' why certain pupils are not attending school as regularly as they should. This means

that pupils receive bespoke support that is well matched to their individual needs. As a result, absence rates for disadvantaged pupils are decreasing quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils routinely apply their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills to their writing in all curriculum subjects
- in key stage 2, pupils with low prior attainment develop the handwriting skills they need to record their ideas fluently and legibly
- subject leaders use assessment information to evaluate the impact of their work to improve pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Murphy-Dutton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection.

- I met with senior leaders and subject leaders to evaluate the impact of their work to strengthen teaching and improve pupils' outcomes.
- I visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work with you and your deputy.
- I listened to pupils from Year 6 read and spoke to them about their experiences at school. I also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school.
- I met with representatives from the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with the school's improvement partner from the local authority.
- I scrutinised a range of documentation, including safeguarding records and minutes of governing body meetings.
- I took account of the 64 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents.