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Mrs Karen Riddell  
Headteacher  
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Deal  
Kent  
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Dear Mrs Riddell

### **Short inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 April 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 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your vision for St Mary's is ambitious. You lead by example and your work is highly valued by staff, governors and the trust. You have a clear commitment to working with other school leaders within your locality, your trust and beyond. You are keen to learn with colleagues but are also asked to share your school's strengths with others. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's many strengths and also know what can be even better. You have clear plans to improve the broad and balanced curriculum further. However, these have yet to have a positive impact across the school.

You and your staff have created a warm and welcoming school. Parents value the work of the school and the culture you have developed. As one parent noted, 'The school is like a huge family that looks after one and other from the day they enter to the day they leave.' You regularly ask parents to share their views about their children's education and they welcome the fact that you listen and act where appropriate.

Governors and the trust are effective. The local governing body knows the school well. They monitor the work of leaders closely and use their visits to school to see at first-hand what leaders tell them. Visits from the trust's advisers provide good support and challenge to leaders. They celebrate what is working well and focus on where improvements could be made. Governors value and use the trust's scrutiny of the school's work to hold leaders to account.

At the time of the last inspection, one of the strengths was the progress that pupils made because of effective teaching. You have maintained this strength. The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is consistently above those found nationally. In 2015 and 2016, almost all pupils in Year 1 met the expected standard in phonics. In 2016, standards at the end of key stage 1 and 2 were good because pupils made similar progress to other pupils nationally with the same starting points, including disadvantaged pupils. However, you have identified that the most able writers are not always challenged as much as they could be in Year 1.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that teachers give pupils the information they require to improve their work, particularly in mathematics. You have done this; the teaching of mathematics is effective and pupils make good progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have created a culture where pupils' safety and well-being are given the highest priority. Leaders and staff with a named responsibility for keeping pupils safe keep detailed and clear records of all concerns regarding pupils. All communication including with pupils and parents is recorded and logged meticulously. Leaders work effectively with a wide range of partner agencies, including the local authority. Referrals to secure additional support for families are thorough and timely.

Pupils feel safe in school and are taught to keep safe, including online. Pupils recall instantly key messages they have been given. They talk with enthusiasm about the visitors, including the police, fire service and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, that have come into school over time to talk with them about staying safe. Staff and parents say they feel that pupils are safe in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection I looked at: the progress that the most able key stage 1 pupils make in English; the progress that key stage 2 pupils are making in mathematics; and the progress that pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The most able pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in English. Planned learning often builds on what pupils know and can do. Pupils are given good opportunities to use their phonic knowledge in their writing. They are taught to spell effectively and use punctuation appropriately. However, some of the planned learning experiences do not always provide enough opportunities for the most able pupils to write creatively for sustained periods in Year 1.
- Pupils in key stage 2 are making good or better progress in their mathematics, including the most able pupils and those who need to catch up. Pupils are clear about what they are learning and why. They are given a good range of

mathematical problems to solve and as a result, pupils develop good reasoning skills. A well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils can use and apply their mathematical understanding in a wide range of meaningful ways during their geography and science work.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The provision for children in the early years is very good. Children are given a rich and varied range of exciting learning opportunities. During this inspection, wizards and witches were making scary potions using eyeballs and bugs. Children shared with clarity, pride and a very high level of recall their outdoor learning since they joined the school. They spoke of the patterns they had made, the bugs they had unearthed and the stories they had retold and created. Children talk at length about their learning because they are excited about the possibilities their classroom offers them. As a result, children develop strong communication skills.
- The wider curriculum in Year 1 is not as engaging or well planned as it is in the early years. Planned experiences do not always build on what pupils already know and can do in subjects such as science, art and history. Leaders know this and are in the process of improving the Year 1 curriculum.
- Pupils in key stage 2 make good progress across the curriculum in subjects such as art and history. Pupils are excited by their learning because teachers find creative and practical ways to make learning meaningful. Pupils talk with pride about the Stone Age dens and air raid shelters that they built over time. Pupils develop good historical knowledge and skills such as researching key facts and comparing and contrasting different times in history. Teachers have good subject knowledge. As a result, they teach key concepts and vocabulary well and pupils make good progress.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- planned learning in Year 1 enables the most able writers to make even better progress
- pupils in Year 1 make the same progress in subjects other than English and mathematics as pupils do in key stage 2 and the early years.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied senior leaders to all three key stages. We evaluated a range of work in pupils' books. I spoke to an adviser from the trust and reviewed their visit reports. I spoke to pupils around the school, met a group of older pupils over lunch and looked at 39 pupil questionnaires. I scrutinised 32 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 16 staff survey returns. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.