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3 May 2017

Mrs Jacintha Martin  
Headteacher  
St Francesca Cabrini Primary School  
Forest Hill Road  
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Dear Mrs Martin

### **Short inspection of St Francesca Cabrini Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 June 2013.

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

Despite considerable issues with staffing, you and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have created a culture where staff are keen to share good practice and act on advice on improving their skills. With the support of governors, you are developing the leadership in the school further by ensuring that you train middle leaders well to supplement the work of your effective senior team. The group of middle leaders I met were excited to have this opportunity and spoke with confidence about their roles and the impact they have had on improving pupils' outcomes.

You are clear about the school's strengths and what you need to do to improve it further. You put relevant measures in place to ensure that these improvements take hold. Progress in writing across key stage 2 dipped to well below the national average in 2015. You tackled this effectively by introducing a range of successful strategies that continue to be used. Consequently, progress in writing was in the top 10% of schools nationally for pupils who left Year 6 in 2016. However, progress in reading fell below the national average last year. You have correctly identified this as an improvement priority.

Disadvantaged pupils generally do well in key stage 2. However, disadvantaged pupils with low starting points did not do as well as they could in key stage 1 last year, both in the phonics screening check in Year 1 and in national tests at the end of Year 2. You have also prioritised this as an area for improvement.

You have met the recommendations from the previous inspection well. Inspectors found that pupils did not always know what they needed to do to improve their learning. You provided staff training and revised relevant school policies. The feedback teachers now give has a clear impact on pupils' outcomes. For example, pupils I spoke to said that their teachers really helped them know what to work on to become better readers.

On our walks around the school, I was impressed by how well pupils focus on their learning. I also noted the strong links across the curriculum, for example Year 2's Victorian bathing machines linked their history topic with design and technology skills. You clearly put values, including British values, at the heart of the school's work, cleverly connecting this with the strong Catholic ethos. You exploit the school's international connections and the fact that Saint Francesca is the patron saint of immigrants to strengthen pupils' moral and cultural development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You use the local authority's guidance for safeguarding because you know that it is rigorous. All staff training is up to date and includes training on current national priorities such as the 'Prevent' duty. Governors have also had training which includes training on the safe recruitment of staff. The checks made on the suitability of adults to work with children are methodically recorded. Staff are vigilant in reporting any concerns, which are carefully followed up. Pictures around the school and on the website ensure that everybody knows who to go to if there are concerns.

Parents speak highly of how well the school meets their children's needs and say that their children feel safe and love coming to school. Leaders ensure that there are opportunities for pupils to learn about staying safe. For example, the teaching of computing focuses on being safe online.

### **Inspection findings**

- Last year, attendance figures were low for some groups. You have worked closely with families and the education welfare officer. This has resulted in improvements for the groups concerned.
- You have ensured that the gains made in writing have been sustained. Middle leaders told me that writing lessons are based upon inspiring stories that motivate pupils and capture their interest. When we looked at work in books, we could see that this was the case. Pupils use excellent vocabulary to express themselves and are very confident with complex grammar and punctuation.
- Too few disadvantaged pupils with low starting points made the progress necessary to catch up with their peers across key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics last year. You have tackled this. Their needs are better met now and more pupils from this group are on track to catch up by the end of Year 2. This was particularly evident in mathematics teaching and in pupils' books.

However, in reading and writing, the support they receive is not as carefully matched to their starting points so progress is not as rapid.

- Disadvantaged pupils did not do well enough in the phonics check last year. You have made changes to address this, not least by ensuring that there is a middle leader to oversee it. The results of a recent assessment set by the school to assess pupils' phonics skills show that this year's outcomes are on track to improve on last year's. However, partly due to unforeseen staff changes, there is still some variability in how well phonics is taught.
- The proportion of the most able pupils who reached the high standard at the end of Year 6 last year was below average in reading and mathematics. Looking at current pupils' learning, including scrutiny of their work in books, I could see that there is now a high level of challenge for them. They are confidently working on complex ideas and using sophisticated language to explain their understanding. Your internal information shows that results are set to improve this year.
- The most able pupils I read with could discuss their choice of books confidently. They understood the plot and characters in great detail and could answer complex questions.
- I also read with less-able pupils who all used their phonics skills to help them read. Some of these pupils could also use a range of other strategies to tackle unfamiliar words, such as recognising words by sight and using other clues from the text or the pictures. These pupils had made rapid progress from their starting points and were showing signs of catching up with their peers. However, not all pupils were equally confident in doing this.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- phonics is taught consistently well by all staff
- the needs of less-able pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are as carefully met in reading and writing as they are in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Jeanie Jovanova  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

- During the inspection, I met with you, the senior management team, middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and a group of governors.
- I visited phonics teaching in key stage 1 and mathematics and reading sessions across the school.
- I listened to a selected group of pupils of different abilities reading.
- I held informal discussions with pupils while they undertook their work in classrooms and when reading with them.
- I had conversations with parents.
- I undertook a scrutiny of work in pupils' books.
- I evaluated information provided by the school, including safeguarding records, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance information, the school's evaluation of its performance and information about pupils' progress.
- I considered the results of a recent school parent survey.