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Mr David Feasey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Feasey

Short inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017 with David Lloyd, Ofsted Inspector, 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 February 2012.

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 leadership team have continued to improve the school to fulfil your vision for pupils' education, academic success and personal development within the Catholic faith. You are skilled at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school's practice and plan accordingly. School development priorities are clear to staff. Pupils have also been involved in the design of the new curriculum. Middle leaders are developing well in their roles; they are fully focused on pupils' learning and communicate a passion for their subject. As a result, the school's outcomes in 2016 at the end of both key stages and in early years were strong, across the range of subjects and for all groups of pupils.

Governance is a strongly developing aspect of school leadership. Governors, with the support of Merton local authority, recently undertook a review of their own structure and practice. As a result, there have been substantial changes to the way in which governors challenge and support you and your leadership team. The two co-chairs of the governing body have been in post for four months, so these are relatively recent changes, but they are already having an impact. Governors scrutinise the school's information about pupils' progress more regularly and thoroughly. They have their own governors' action plan to ensure that they are up to date with the requirements of governance. Governors represented the school very effectively during the inspection.

Pupils are clear that they enjoy coming to school, learning in classes and the range

of subjects on offer. Pupils' writing is particularly strong and they make progress that is well above the national average. Pupils are well looked after, yet also enjoy more responsibility as they move up the school. They feel listened to and see that the school council makes a difference and can make changes happen, for example to lunchtime arrangements. All adults, from the headteacher to mid-day school assistants, role model assertive and positive behaviour for pupils. This has a significant impact on pupils' confidence, and academic and personal 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. This includes the staff employment vetting checks. School leaders have developed a rigorous process and the single central record of checks is clear and concise. It is checked regularly by the headteacher and by governors who have responsibility for safeguarding. School leaders ensure that training for all staff is up to date and that staff know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' welfare.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils understand that they should always tell adults if they have any concerns and they are confident that adults will take action. Relationships between pupils are strong. Pupils are encouraged to be assertive if any behaviour of others upsets them. They understand the need to apologise if things go wrong. The school supports peer relationships with friendship monitors and play buddies in each year group. Pupils are trained for their leadership roles and wear badges and high-visibility jackets when they take on responsible roles. As a result, peer friendships are strong. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they are confident that adults will always deal with it. Pupils are clear that they feel safe.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, pupils made slightly less progress in reading compared with their progress in writing and mathematics. This was particularly true for middle- and higher attaining boys. Leaders have ensured that reading is a key priority in the school improvement plan and has a high profile with staff, pupils, and parents and carers.
- Pupils enjoy the timetabled guided reading activities. They generally read fluently and with expression; they can give their opinions on different authors. Older pupils can explain why they chose their reading books and can describe how they use a dictionary to look up any words that are unfamiliar to them. Pupils apply their knowledge of imaginative writing to make a good attempt at explaining the meaning of unusual words in the text. Younger pupils in key stage 1, particularly boys, sometimes struggle to apply their phonics knowledge to decode words in the text.
- School leaders run a range of additional support activities and initiatives to complement the high-quality classroom teaching. Boys can explain how these

sessions have helped them to develop their understanding of inference. As a result, they can read for meaning more effectively. Pupils are encouraged to read at home on a regular basis and there are reading buddies in year groups. Parents have information about how to support their child's reading and parent volunteers listen to pupils read and support reading activities in school. This focus on reading is having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment. School progress information shows that overall, pupils are on track for better outcomes at expected and higher standards at the end of key stage 2 than previously.

- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards mathematics and take great pride in their work. They enjoy the challenge of the subject, the range of topics and problem-solving aspects. Teachers plan interesting problems and activities which capture pupils' imagination. Work in pupils' books in mathematics indicates that disadvantaged pupils are achieving in line with other groups of pupils. Pupils' reasoning powers are particularly strong, but true mathematical investigations are less well developed.
- The science curriculum is in the early stages of its development. Pupils are developing their scientific knowledge over time but there are limited opportunities for pupils to do investigative work and apply their numeracy skills. School leaders have identified training for teachers in this subject as a priority.
- Writing is a strength of the school and is developed systematically from an early age in the Reception Year. There is a wide range of writing opportunities within activities indoors and outside. Pupils enjoy writing and were keen to share their work with inspectors. Pupils' phonics knowledge is strong and this has a positive impact on their reading progress and attainment. Reading activities are carefully planned to appeal to both boys and girls. There is a broad curriculum and engaging activities in number work for pupils.
- Pupils are safe and secure and ready to learn. Effective leadership of the early years ensures that all groups of children, including disadvantaged children, boys and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils achieve greater mastery in mathematics, including through investigative work
- boys' interest in, and motivation to read are further strengthened and nurtured so that their progress is consistently strong across all year groups and matches that of girls
- middle leaders in all subjects, including science, are supported to develop their vision further, to ensure that pupils make even more progress.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the governing body, the director of

education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Merton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Hallett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with the headteacher and the senior leadership team at the start of the school day to review the school's self-evaluation and plan inspection activities. Inspectors visited classes in a range of subjects, in all year groups, to observe pupils' learning and to look at work in their books. Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, including subject leaders and staff responsible for safeguarding and behaviour. Meetings were held with the co-chairs of the governing body and a representative of Merton local authority. Inspectors spoke with pupils in classes and around the school about their views of the school and listened to pupils read. Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including safeguarding records. Inspectors considered the 24 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and a letter and an email received from parents.