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Mrs Bernadette Greally
Headteacher
St Thomas a Becket Roman Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Greally

Short inspection of St Thomas a Becket Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has changed significantly in that time. In 2013, the school expanded and became a two-form-entry school. The school now has a second site close by the original building for key stage 1 and early years.

You were appointed as headteacher in March 2016 following a year of interim headship. Within a short time, you introduced important changes. You restructured the leadership team and prioritised areas for development across the school. The cohesion between the two sites was a key factor. You have ensured that the positive ethos is consistent across both sites, so that all staff and pupils feel part of one school. You have established a very strong culture that emphasises pupils' personal development as well as their academic achievement. As a result, you have consolidated and built on the school's performance since the last inspection.

You and your leadership team continue to drive improvements in teaching and learning. Consequently, teaching is strong and pupils achieve very well overall. The previous inspection identified writing as an area for development. Pupils now have more opportunities to write in different subjects and writing is strong as a result.

Parents appreciate the school's work and say that their children are happy and safe at the school. Pupils spoken to also share this view and speak proudly of their school. The early years provision in particular has flourished and leaders have used the improved space creatively. Standards in early years are much improved as a

result of good leadership.

Leaders have reviewed the school's effectiveness openly and honestly. They know the school's strengths and have clear plans to address areas for improvement. Leaders know that the new mathematics curriculum needs to be embedded across the school and developed so that pupils are consistently moved on in their learning. You have a stable and committed staff who value your leadership. They welcome the opportunities you offer for professional development and know that you will listen to their ideas. As the school continues to grow, you recognise that leaders at all levels will need to adapt to further improve the school. It is clear that teachers and middle leaders are increasingly well placed to take on more responsibilities.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that the safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school site is secure and well supervised. Leaders are diligent in ensuring that the appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff. All members of the school leadership team have completed extensive training so that there is always a designated safeguarding lead on each site. You ensure that staff are up to date in their training and that they follow the school's procedures for reporting concerns. Leaders follow up any concerns promptly and seek guidance from external agencies if necessary.

Leaders remind pupils regularly about the importance of talking to an adult if they have any worries. As a result, pupils say that they can speak to a member of staff at any time or write down their concerns. Pupils are taught how to stay safe in school and in the local area. The 'shine online' scheme encourages pupils and parents to highlight and share any concerns they come across on the internet.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry explored the achievement of pupils in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In 2016, standards in phonics dropped and the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard was below the national average. The dip was most significant for disadvantaged pupils. The school had already identified this as a key priority.
- You and your leaders analysed the outcomes and considered the best plan of action. You decided to develop a consistent approach to teaching phonics from early years onwards. Teachers and support staff received additional training and they are confident in using the same methods. Closer tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress mean that pupils at risk of underachievement are identified earlier. Leaders deploy support staff well and pupils receive individual or small-group teaching which is tailored well to their needs. Lunchtime phonics clubs are proving effective in helping Year 2 pupils who did not meet the expected standard last year.
- Current performance information indicates that the majority of pupils in Year 1 are on track to achieve the expected standard. This includes disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are keen to make phonics learning fun, both in school and at

home. They hold workshops for parents to learn how best to support their child with engaging resources. From lesson observations, it is clear that pupils enjoy learning phonics and they are making good progress.

- The second key line of enquiry we agreed to look at related to key stage 1 attainment in mathematics. In 2016, attainment in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 was above the national average. From the same year group, the number of pupils achieving the expected standard in mathematics was weaker by comparison.
- At key stage 2, mathematics has consistently been a strength of the school. However, leaders recognised that the quality of mathematics teaching was not consistent across the school. In response, they launched a new mathematics curriculum for Years 1 to 6. Staff are now fully trained in the new approach to teaching mathematics.
- Mathematics lessons are well structured so that pupils work progressively through topics, reinforcing and building on what they already know. On-the-spot assessment means that teachers review pupils' understanding in each lesson. Gaps in learning or misconceptions are addressed effectively through additional support later that day. Booster groups for Year 2 pupils are well attended and staff are working hard to address any areas of underachievement.
- Your actions to improve teaching and learning in mathematics are having a clear impact. Current performance information shows that rates of progress in mathematics are improving for all pupils. However, leaders acknowledge that they are still developing the curriculum to ensure that it suits the needs of all pupils. At times, pupils have to wait before they can move on in their learning.
- The final key line of enquiry we agreed to consider was the impact of additional funding, in particular the physical education and sport premium and pupil premium. At the time of the inspection, the website did not include information on how leaders, including governors, reviewed additional funding to ensure that it is used effectively.
- You were able to explain in detail how the additional funding is allocated and evaluated to assess the impact it is having. These reports are now on the website. A specialist sports coach delivers high-quality lessons to all year groups, working with class teachers to develop their skills in teaching physical education. Pupils have opportunities to take part in a wide range of sports and to represent the school in competitions.
- The pupil premium funding is also used to good effect, primarily to provide additional staff to support pupils' learning in all year groups. The improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, particularly in mathematics and phonics, show that the funding is making a difference.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new approach to mathematics teaching is embedded so that it is consistently

effective across the school

- the roles and responsibilities of leaders at all levels are reviewed to ensure high standards are maintained as the school expands.

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 Greenwich. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jude Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I met with some members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I had a discussion with a representative from the local authority. I observed key stage 1 lessons in mathematics and phonics, accompanied by you, and spoke to pupils. I went to the second school site to visit classes in key stage 2. I evaluated documentation provided by you, including the school's safeguarding procedures, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, and policies and reviews of additional funding. I considered the responses to the Ofsted questionnaire from 36 parents and eight members of staff.