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Mr Simon Geaves
Headteacher
Saint Paulinus Primary Catholic Voluntary Academy
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Dear Mr Geaves

Short inspection of Saint Paulinus Primary Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained and enhanced the good quality of education in the school since the section 5 inspection of the predecessor school. You have worked with governors, other leaders and staff to ensure that your vision that all pupils can 'reach for the stars' will be realised. You and your team are honest about the school's areas of strength and things that need further improvement. For example, changes of staff in early years have meant that this area of the school's work has not built on previous strengths with the same speed as in the other key stages. You are already working with staff and looking to good practice across the trust and beyond to improve matters.

The school's Christian values of respect, enjoyment, acceptance and love lie at the heart of everyone's work, including the pupils'. This is an inclusive and harmonious school community where everyone is welcomed and valued equally. Pupils' personal qualities – their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their behaviour and attitudes – are exemplary and remain a strength of the school.

Your relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching has ensured that teaching is usually very strong. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. This highly effective teaching has resulted in much higher proportions of pupils achieving the standards expected nationally by the end of key stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. This is also the case for the proportions of pupils achieving highly in reading and mathematics. You know that there is still more work to do to ensure that this is also the case in writing.

You have ensured that weaknesses identified in subject leadership at the time of the last inspection have been eradicated. Senior, middle and subject leadership is now a strength. Your inclusive, insightful leadership has empowered all leaders to fulfil their roles with great confidence and much success. This has resulted in a highly cohesive and effective staff team whose members share your ambition. They continually strive to do the best for their pupils and the school community. Collectively, you have created a dynamic and highly engaging curriculum that inspires pupils in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Recruitment procedures are rigorous in ensuring that those adults who work with pupils in the school are fit to do so. Staff are trained regularly in all aspects of safeguarding, including those who join the school mid-way through the year. They have a good understanding of the up-to-date safeguarding policies in school and know how important it is to refer any concerns to you as designated safeguarding leader. You are all vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe in school and that pupils understand how they can keep themselves safe in school, online and from risks in the local community and beyond. You take prompt action in referring any safeguarding concerns to appropriate agencies and have developed strong partnerships with these agencies to secure any necessary support.

Pupils spoke confidently about how safe they are in school and how well they are taught to understand risks to their safety. They report that staff are always ready to help and support them in their learning and well-being.

Inspection findings

- I came to the school wanting to know whether subject leadership had improved since the last inspection. All leaders are fully involved in improving the school's work. You and your team have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is due to the regular monitoring activities you all carry out which result in brisk actions to tackle weaker areas of teaching. Leaders speak highly of the training and coaching they receive to help them to improve their skills. Improvements in subject leadership and in the quality of teaching have ensured that pupils thrive in the enriching and broadly based curriculum that sits alongside the reading, writing, mathematics and religious education curriculum.
- Pupils say that the work teachers set is exciting and enables them to study subjects such as history, geography, science and the arts in an interesting and fun way. Appealing displays around the school currently include Year 1 pupils' inspirational paintings of birds and science topic work, Year 6 pupils' work on the human body and Year 3 pupils' Stone Age project. They reflect teachers' high expectations of pupils' learning, writing and presentation of work.
- I wanted to check whether pupils' progress in writing had improved and whether

there were any improvements in boys' achievement in phonics in Year 1 this year. Robust systems of assessing and monitoring learning are ensuring that action is taken in a timely way to help pupils at risk of falling behind, or any groups who are not doing as well as they should. Although there is still a gap between the attainment of boys and girls in writing, the gap is diminishing effectively. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard is now greater than that of all pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2. The more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics from early years, into key stage 1, and beyond where needed, is ensuring that pupils' achievements in reading are well above average.

- There has been a significant investment in developing reading and the library area is full of enticing books. Last week's 'Roald Dahl week' is just one example of the way you try to foster a real love of reading. Pupils' superb displays of their writing, artwork and photographs from the week are a joy to see. You know that there is still more to do to ensure that more pupils achieve highly in writing. Proportions are similar to that found nationally. Occasionally, teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' current skills and knowledge to plan writing activities that move them on quickly from what they know and understand, particularly the most able pupils.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is so low in each year group it is difficult to assess trends in their achievements compared with those of pupils nationally over time. However, because of the individualised work and support for pupils who need extra help in their learning, they too achieve as well as their peers.
- I also wanted to check why the outcomes in early years were not as good as those in the rest of the school in 2017. You clarified that the dip in results this summer was as a result of turbulence in staffing. While children's outcomes were at least in line with the national average, you rightly want them to be much better. You are working with the leader of early years and leaders in the trust to implement focused plans for improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships among each other and adults are exemplary. Pupils come to school regularly and enjoy taking part in all that the school has to offer. Pupils would, however, like more after-school clubs. You know this and plans are already afoot to broaden the offer.
- The local governing board is strong. Governors challenge you and your team on the impact of the school's work successfully. They receive a wide range of information against which to check the school's impact on pupils' learning, progress, attendance and safety. They are very clear about areas that need to improve because your reports to them pull no punches in recognising things that are not as good as they should be.

- You look beyond the school to seek outstanding practice and learn from the best. You are constantly striving to ensure that good practice is embedded across the

school. Other leaders and staff value highly the support and challenge you afford them and the support from the Landmark Teaching School Alliance, which is contributing to the improvements in school. Parents, staff and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about St Paulinus. Staff say that your inclusive vision and leadership are helping them to do their jobs well. They are energised and eager to continue to support you and governors to improve the school further so that it is the very best it can be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress made by children in early years improves so that it is as strong as that of pupils in other key stages
- teachers take better account of pupils' current skills and knowledge in writing, particularly for the most able, to plan activities that enable pupils to make more rapid progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing board, the director of education for the Diocese of Middlesbrough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Redcar and Cleveland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss the impact of actions you are taking to continue to improve the school and to discuss safeguarding arrangements. We observed learning together in four classes, looked at pupils' workbooks and talked to pupils about their learning. I also held meetings with three representatives of the local governing board, two representatives from the trust and a local authority school improvement officer. I talked to pupils on the playground and in classes and listened to three pupils read. I reviewed the results of the national assessments of children in early years, and pupils in Year 1, the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. I also checked the assessment information of all other year groups, and groups of pupils for the last academic year.

Account was taken of the 43 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, the 13 responses to the staff survey and the 75 responses to Ofsted's parent and carer questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the 34 written responses to this survey. A number of

documents were scrutinised. These included a range of safeguarding documents, the school's written evaluation of its work and the school improvement plan. I also reviewed your recent headteacher's reports to the governing board and minutes from recent full governing board meetings and committee meetings.