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Mr James Blomfield
Headteacher
St Richard's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mr Blomfield

Short inspection of St Richard's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your recent appointment as headteacher, you have already had a positive impact, through the experience and skills you bring to the school. You have evaluated the school's effectiveness accurately, and used this information to prioritise actions to improve outcomes for pupils. You have successfully created a new leadership team with the ambition to continue to improve learning and provide support in their areas of responsibility. The leadership team benefit from advice and training which the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership provide for you. Your focus on collaboration with the trust and local school group has ensured that initiatives are appropriate and effective.

Pupils feel valued at school as a result of the positive and supportive relationships which leaders have created. Pupils know that teachers listen to their views and act upon them. Leaders have created a positive school environment where pupils recognise their cultural diversity and welcome new pupils into the school's caring community. They benefit from links with the local community and most recently worked on a project with adults from a local ferry company. Teachers organise events days and visits from authors which enrich pupils' learning. Pupils are given opportunities to compete with pupils from other schools in the local area and participate in local events through music and sport.

When your predecessor school was inspected, the inspectors recognised many strengths of the school, including good teaching, the progress pupils made in reading and writing, and pupils' behaviour. They also identified a need for leaders and governors to make sure that teachers consistently offered pupils more challenging work and pupils' progress in mathematics improved. Leaders have addressed these areas and mathematics is continuing to improve. Children in Reception make good progress from their starting points. Older pupils are able to describe the challenges they are given and demanding activities are seen in their books.

You, your staff and governors are not complacent. You know that teachers' expectations of pupils are high but the design of the curriculum does not yet provide enough opportunities for pupils to extend their learning. Leaders are also aware of some variability in the progress of key stage 2 pupils, and you are taking appropriate steps to improve teaching still further. You have responded to the learning needs of pupils by focusing on fluency when reading, developing mathematics and providing an exciting early years environment.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that a strong safeguarding culture runs throughout the school. Staff receive regular training, which helps them to keep pupils safe from harm. Staff record and pass on concerns quickly. When required, leaders work well with external agencies to protect pupils. Leaders are diligent and pursue additional support and advice when they have concerns.

You complete statutory checks on all staff, governors and volunteers. Governors are trained appropriately in safer recruitment practices and monitor the work of the school to satisfy themselves that checks are completed. When pupils do not attend school, this is followed up promptly. The family liaison worker and education welfare officer work together to maintain good attendance. Pupils receive rewards for 100% attendance and significantly improved attendance. A new superheroes project has been introduced to reduce persistent absence.

Pupils describe the school as a safe place, a view supported by parents. Pupils are confident that staff care for them and will support them if they have any concerns. Pupils are kind to each other and welcoming to new pupils. They do not tolerate unkind acts or bullying of any kind. They are taught how to stay safe, including the importance of e-safety.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the challenges given to key stage 2 pupils in all areas of learning; how well children in early years are prepared for the next stage in their learning; the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, including pupils' attendance; and the ways in which the new leadership team are maintaining a good quality of education.

- You teach pupils to make the most of their talents and have introduced initiatives to raise self-esteem and improve pupils' ability to be challenged. However, pupils do not always know how well they are doing and what they need to do to work at greater depth, or make more progress. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and work alongside teachers to help individual pupils and remove any barriers to learning. Teachers have further developed their skills through specialist training and support from the local network of schools.
- Leaders' actions to accelerate progress in mathematics have been effective. Pupils are developing their reasoning skills and problem-solving skills well, alongside their knowledge of calculation strategies. They are able to make predictions in mathematics and classify in science.
- Writing is taught well but pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in a wide range of curriculum subjects. Although pupils acquire phonics skills, they do not always develop fluency in reading. In response to this, leaders have introduced a range of actions which will help pupils increase their vocabulary and improve fluency.
- Children often begin the early years with skills and understanding below those seen typically. During the last academic year, changes were made to the early years learning environment, creating opportunities for children to develop a wider range of skills. Planning across all areas of learning has supported improvements to early years teaching. This includes a particular focus on developing speech and language so that children are better prepared for key stage 1.
- During the inspection, children were able to move freely between a wide variety of activities. They were able to play well together and share resources but could also choose to work alone. Adults promoted play and learning through careful questioning and guidance.
- Leaders have been monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, with a sharp focus on mathematics. The systems used to monitor the progress pupils make and evaluate the impact of new initiatives are not yet well developed and lack precision. Despite this, leaders have taken appropriate action to improve teaching and learning. Changes made to early years teaching, mathematics and reading have already had an impact on pupils' learning and progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems used to monitor and evaluate the quality of education are refined
- the wider curriculum is extended and enriched to inspire pupils to learn and progress more rapidly in all subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership, 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

Ann McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together with you, I observed learning across the whole school. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I met with school leaders, three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and a representative of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership. I spoke to pupils and examined work in their books. I considered 16 responses to the staff survey and 17 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and I spoke to parents at the school gate. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement and attendance, the school improvement plan, evidence of monitoring visits and moderation, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.