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Mrs Rachael Snowdon-Poole
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Snowdon-Poole

Short inspection of St George's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils continue to make good progress. You have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders, other staff and governors know and understand these well. You have used your detailed knowledge of pupils to create a sharply focused improvement plan. This is designed to maximise pupils' progress. All staff and governors share your high aspirations for all pupils. You lead by example and are determined to improve further the quality of teaching and learning at the school.

You have maintained the considerable strengths noted at the last inspection. Behaviour is particularly good. Pupils are happy, confident and proud of the school. You ensure that the school's core values are fully included in the curriculum and regularly reinforced in lessons. Pupils are taught to understand and respect all faiths. Staff encourage pupils to have self-belief, resilience and curiosity, so that they 'grow in faith and have faith in growing'.

Parents hold the school and its staff in high esteem and value how approachable you and the teachers are. They appreciate the spiritual nurturing and pastoral care which you provide for pupils. One parent echoed the comments of many and described how you have successfully created an ethos of 'overwhelming kindness, inclusion and high standards'.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. Writing became a whole-school priority and you provided additional training for staff. We saw together that all staff apply school systems and policies consistently. This is helping pupils to make faster progress during their time at the school. In 2017, pupils' progress in writing was well above the national average.

Leaders identified that pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics were not strong enough. They adapted the curriculum to remedy this. Teachers in all years consistently apply the whole-school approach to teaching mathematics. They expect pupils to learn, practise, apply and then prove something. Teachers quickly deal with pupils' misconceptions. Pupils are confident to have a go at mathematical problems. They use the correct mathematical terminology in their explanations and discussions. Pupils enjoy the active, real-life approach to mathematics that their teachers provide. You recognise, however, that too few pupils reach the higher standard at the end of key stage 2. Leaders have provided training for all staff to develop their mathematical subject knowledge. This includes teaching assistants. Staff are not equally good at supporting pupils to reach greater depth in mathematics. You acknowledge that further training is needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. A recent audit confirmed the quality of the school's procedures and practices. You used it to make further improvements to the care and protection of pupils. You have used pupil-friendly language to explain the risks of involvement in gang culture and substance misuse, for example. Leaders have also run information evenings for parents to help them protect their children. These have helped them understand better the potential local dangers.

All the required checks on staff and volunteers are carried out and recorded carefully. Leaders, governors and staff undertake regular and up-to-date training on child protection and safeguarding issues. All staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities to ensure children's safety and well-being. You reinforce important messages about safeguarding through weekly staff meetings and meetings of the governing body. The files you showed me indicate that staff make prompt referrals when they have any concerns. Leaders are tenacious in seeking and pursuing external support when needed. You and the staff team take great pride in knowing each pupil and their family well. This ensures prompt action, support and guidance, should the need arise. Governors, in turn, support leaders when they have to deal with upsetting safeguarding cases.

Pupils are confident that staff look after them well. They told me that they feel very safe at school. All of the parents with whom I spoke, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, confirmed that their children feel safe. Pupils said that bullying is extremely rare. If it does happen, they have complete confidence in staff to deal with it quickly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- Many changes to leadership and staffing have taken place since the last inspection. These include your appointment and those of other senior leaders. These appointments have strengthened leadership at the school. Leaders are accountable for the areas that they oversee. You work together effectively as a team to support whole-school improvement.
- The governing body has also changed significantly since the last inspection. A new chair and vice-chair have been appointed. The governing body is committed to developing the school further. The governors have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the school's priorities for development. They understand the importance of raising pupils' achievement. Governors challenge staff effectively to make sure they do this. You and other staff keep them well informed with the data they need. The governing body makes sure that the school's use of extra funding has a positive impact on pupils' well-being and progress. For example, pupil premium funding has been successfully used to provide a breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have made improving the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils a whole-school priority. You used an external review of the use of pupil premium funding to ensure that it has maximum impact on pupils' achievement. The deputy headteacher has also recently qualified as an external pupil premium reviewer. Disadvantaged pupils are now identified much earlier so that they can be given the right support to catch up. You monitor their progress carefully to ensure that this support is working. As a result, disadvantaged pupils made faster progress in all subjects last year. Their current books show that this progress has been sustained this year.
- The school provides excellent care and support to vulnerable children and their families. This involves the child protection team and a child protection and attendance officer. They have successfully reduced the amount of time that disadvantaged pupils are absent from school and improved their punctuality. Leaders publish weekly attendance figures, celebrate good attendance and challenge absences promptly. They are taking all possible steps to maximise pupils' attendance. All the pupils who I spoke with clearly understood the importance of good attendance. They found the rewards, such as a '99 ice-cream' for pupils whose attendance is above 99%, highly motivational in helping them to be in school.
- You and other teachers carefully check pupils' progress. You hold regular meetings with teachers to ensure that they meet each pupil's needs. When pupils are falling behind, you provide additional support. Its impact is also checked carefully by teachers. The school's tracking system is rigorous. It provides useful assessment information so that teachers can check pupils' progress regularly. You work with the local authority and within the cluster of Catholic schools to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate.
- Leaders have revised the curriculum to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to develop their inference skills and stamina in reading. All pupils have daily reading lessons matched to their ability. You have also ensured that

pupils have developed a love of reading and have access to a wide range of books.

- Pupils were excited to tell me about the quizzes and questions which they complete about their reading book. The proportion of pupils who achieve greater depth in reading has improved significantly as a result.
- Pupils develop good phonics skills and knowledge. Teachers and other staff build on pupils' existing knowledge. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check is above the national average. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic readers and are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Teachers provide interesting and stimulating learning opportunities. They make good use of the outside space. Teachers and pupils have positive relationships. Pupils willingly follow their teacher's instructions in lessons. Classrooms are attractive. Displays celebrate pupils' work and provide them with helpful prompts and examples of how to make their work better. Pupils said that they enjoy learning because teachers make work fun and help them to do their best. Pupils also work well together to encourage each other's learning.
- You recognise the importance of sport and music at the school. A talented team of staff nurture pupils' talents and ensure that they have the opportunity to share their skills. Pupils appreciate the wider curriculum which you provide. They welcome the activities available on the recently refurbished playground. We saw together all staff and pupils enjoying the morning 'wake and shake' physical activity to get their brains ready for learning. Pupils say there is nothing they would change at the school.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has risen each year. It is now consistently above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers improve their subject knowledge so that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve greater depth in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the Holy Family Catholic Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Nottingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derby. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders and governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils in key stage 2 to talk about their school experience. You and I visited a range of classes, examined pupils' books and talked with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. In addition, I checked the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated the school's documentation about pupils' achievement, planning for improvement, and attendance. I reviewed the minutes of meetings of the governing body. I took account of the 18 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 21 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text service. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.