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Mrs Suzanne Smith
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of St Bridget's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You changed your role, becoming headteacher, in 2015 and, since then, have led a number of changes, building on the school's previous strengths. A new chair of the governing body was appointed at the start of this school year. Despite this time of change, the school has remained a very positive and hard-working place. Pupils, parents and staff understand the high expectations you set for yourself and others. One factor which has meant that improvement has been successful is the openness with which you acknowledge others' ideas and contributions. It is clear that everyone at the school works for the benefit of pupils. A pupil joining St Bridget's can be confident that they will be valued, looked after and expected to try hard. One sign of the school's high expectations is the new uniform. The school introduced this to celebrate its 50th birthday. Pupils look smart and are justifiably proud of the way they and their uniform represent their school. Pupils' pride in themselves is part of the background to their very good behaviour in lessons and around the school.

You ensure that the school looks outward to its community. For example, you have set up a social media page so that parents can find out about what their children are learning more easily. You identified that there was need for additional Nursery provision in the area and so have established separate Nursery and Reception classes. These provide children with good opportunities and a successful start to school life.

You know what the school does well and also have a clear view about things which can be further improved. You capture these in the school's accurate self-evaluation document and comprehensive development plan. You make sure that leaders are clear about how they can contribute to improvement, for example by asking key stage leaders to identify how planned actions involve their key stage. You have already started to check that the actions planned for this school year are having the expected impact. This helps you to make sure that improvement continues at a suitably fast pace. You are not satisfied that pupils' progress is broadly average and know that raising this to increase pupils' attainment is essential if the school is to do its best for pupils.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked leaders to improve teaching, for example by making sure that work was hard enough and that pupils' writing added to their topic work. I saw teachers skilfully helping pupils to learn. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils to make sure that the work is suitably challenging. Pupils' written work is now a positive feature of the school's work. Pupils in different years confidently use the writing skills they develop in English activities in other subjects. For example, in religious education, as they prepared for Christmas, Year 6 pupils wrote in detail about Advent.

Inspectors also identified that the attendance of some pupils was too low. The school consistently challenges parents whose children's attendance is poor. When families and pupils face issues, members of the school's wider support team are available to give support and encouragement. Pupils are encouraged to attend as well as possible, for example in the weekly 'attendance race' competition which you talk about every week in a school assembly.

The parents I talked with were very positive about the school's work and, in particular, the support provided for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, similarly expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that pupils in the school are properly safeguarded. Leaders have established a framework of openly shared policy and regular training to make sure that staff have confidence to deal with any concerns about pupils' safety. Leaders maintain detailed records to help them make sure that the details of any safeguarding action are readily available. Governors also receive training so that they can fulfil their responsibilities, for example when appointing any new members of staff.

The school's determination to keep pupils safe is demonstrated by the wide display of details about safeguarding. Staff find it helpful to have a dedicated display of information they may need about safeguarding near to the staff room. Pupils can find information, such as about who can help them if they have a problem and how to keep safe when they are using computers, in simple posters around the school. The pupils I spoke to said that they feel safe when they are at school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors work together for the benefit of pupils. You have rapidly built up ways of working with the chair of the governing body which allow him to support you while providing a framework for him to ask you challenging questions about your work. You both recognise the improvement in the school and understand that it can sometimes take time for other changes, in particular to teaching and learning, to have their full impact on increasing the overall rate of pupils' progress. You know that increasing this to become at least above average is the most important next stage for the school as you all strive for it to become even better. This is reflected in the targets you set for all teachers in your continuing review of their work.
- Leaders and teachers are thorough in the way they collect and use information about pupils' learning and results. You expect teachers to record formally their assessment of pupils' learning every term, but also make sure that you all consider how well pupils are doing each half term. This allows teachers and teaching assistants to provide activities which appropriately challenge pupils of different abilities.
- The early years provision in the school is led effectively. Children in the early years learn rapidly. The leader ensures that activities are planned to pick up on any weaker areas in children's experience. For example, over time, the assessment of children as they leave the Reception class has identified that their artistic and creative skills have tended to lag behind other skills. Staff in the early years provide activities which allow children to be creative and develop their fine-movement skills. Staff pay close attention to detail, such as how children learn to hold a pencil. Children enjoy their time in the early years. Pupils talked to me excitedly about how the 'Christmas naughty elf' had drawn moustaches on their photographs on display. This was one example of how staff use a topical activity to develop children's speech and language skills carefully. While I saw pupils learning effectively during activities in the outdoor areas, there were fewer opportunities for them to develop their mathematical skills than their English skills when learning outdoors.
- Leaders and teachers have successfully worked hard to improve teaching. I saw busy and happy classrooms where teachers and teaching assistants were helping pupils to learn successfully. One example of this is in the new approach to teaching mathematics you have introduced. Staff have attended training to give them confidence in delivering teaching which allows pupils to grasp mathematical ideas in depth and also to practise their problem-solving skills. I saw pupils responding well to this approach and being encouraged to try even harder.
- You have led a concerted effort to improve pupils' writing. This has had considerable success. The sample of books I saw showed how pupils made gains in the content and presentation of their work over the last school year and since the start of this year. Pupils generally try very hard to be as neat and tidy in their writing as possible. They know that they may only use a pen once their handwriting is good enough. Pupils write at length about complicated ideas in English and other subjects, such as religious education and science. Teachers

display samples of pupils' writing in classrooms and around the school. This encourages even better writing by pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the established high expectations, effective teaching and good behaviour in the school further allow pupils to learn faster and increase rates of progress so that their attainment is as high as possible.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Lancaster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness. I had discussions with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I had telephone conversations with the headteacher of a nearby school involved in evaluating your school and with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school, during lessons and at playtime. I toured the school with you and paid a further visit to the early years accompanied by the early years leader. I observed teaching and learning in classes across the school and heard a small group of pupils read. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' books. I examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of pupils, the school's self-evaluation document, the development plan, minutes of a meeting of the governing body and information about pupils' achievement. I considered 27 responses completed this school year to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 16 additional written responses, and 86 responses to a questionnaire for parents organised by the school in the previous summer term. I spoke with some parents and grandparents at the start of the school day. I also reviewed 18 responses from members of staff and four responses from pupils to their online questionnaires.