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Mrs Shirley Hulme  
Executive Headteacher  
St Mary's RC Infants School  
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Carshalton  
Surrey  
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Dear Mrs Hulme

### **Short inspection of St Mary's RC Infants School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018, 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 September 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You have a clear vision for improvement and high expectations of staff and pupils. Governors share your high expectations and work to provide the best education for pupils. Pupils make consistently good progress; their attainment over time matches or exceeds national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement in phonics this year warranted a congratulatory letter from the Minister of State for School Standards. Beyond these core subject essentials, you are also committed to provide a comprehensive, wide-ranging experience for pupils.

Your wider team is embracing new leadership roles with renewed purpose. This is leading to an improving quality of teaching and higher standards of achievement. Staff, including new leaders, are taking increasing responsibility for innovating change, although they are still developing their skills in assessing the full impact of these innovations. Consequently, your self-evaluation could be sharper in encouraging your whole team to explore deeper solutions to achieve ongoing improvement.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. For example, the implementation of vertically grouped creativity days provides pupils with challenging experiences to stimulate learning and, in turn, further develop their curiosity. The mindfulness workshop that I saw strongly reflected leaders' commitment to developing pupils' reflective and spiritual development. All learning I observed had a clear sense of purpose, with time well utilised.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school does for their children and for them. They appreciate how ambitious you are for their children, and feel their opinions are valued and acted upon. One parent told me that their child 'could not wait to come back after the holidays'. The promotion of Christian values lies at the heart of everyone's work, including the pupils. The school is a calm and nurturing environment where staff help pupils to develop, both academically and personally. This supports pupils' confidence to learn and promotes high standards of behaviour.

You have developed a bright, lively and stimulating environment. I saw lots of beautiful display work in every classroom, and you showed me the new outdoor play area of which you are rightly proud. As one pupil said, 'teachers make learning fun' and I particularly enjoyed seeing the pupils wearing superhero capes to 'empower them to achieve'.

The governing body has a clear understanding of the strategic role it plays in the leadership of the school. Governors visit classrooms, receive appropriate training and provide robust support and challenge. As a result, they contribute effectively to the school community and are aware of its strengths and areas for further development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is of the highest priority. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training and that those responsible for safeguarding and recruitment have appropriate and up-to-date qualifications. Robust recruitment arrangements ensure that all staff employed are suitable to work with children. Referrals made to the local authority regarding pupils at risk of harm are timely and pursued rigorously. Governors have a strong oversight of safeguarding and, like staff, are well trained and well informed. Governors hold leaders to account appropriately for the actions they take to keep pupils safe.

Pupils told me that they feel very safe in school and that they could go to any member of staff with a worry or concern. They report that bullying 'is very rare' because of the way they are taught to respect and care for one another. Every classroom in the school has a 'worry box' where pupils can post any worries or anxieties they may have. However, my discussions with pupils indicate that leaders need to do more to ensure that pupils have sufficient awareness of fundamental British values, including knowledge of the other faiths and religions in modern Britain.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of this inspection, we agreed on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to find out what leaders had done to ensure that a very high proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics

screening check. At St Mary's RC Infant School, you have clearly prioritised the early teaching of phonics. You ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have targeted training, so that the teaching of phonics is strong across the curriculum. In classrooms, I saw pupils systematically use their phonic knowledge to read unknown words correctly. Teachers make sure that the books pupils read in school have just the right level of challenge, and build effectively on this good foundation through consistent approaches to the teaching of reading.

- As the teaching of early reading skills is now a strength of the school, I wanted to check why no pupils were reported as having achieved reading, (or mathematics) at a greater depth by the end of Year 2. As the requirements of the national curriculum and testing have changed over recent years, your assessment leader has worked hard to ensure that teachers have an appropriate understanding of what pupils must achieve. Consequently, the progress of each individual pupil is tracked. This provides you with a strategic view of pupils' achievement. You showed me that the proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth in 2017 was broadly in line with national benchmarks. An administrative error was the cause of no pupils being reported, and leaders are now aware of this. Your analysis of current pupils' progress indicates that a similar proportion are on track to achieve greater depth in the tests this year.
- At the start of the inspection, the information published on the website did not meet requirements. Although most of the missing information was added by the end of the inspection, the school's plans for the use of the pupil premium and sports grant are not yet sharp enough in evaluating the impact of expenditure on pupils' outcomes.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all staff, including emerging leaders, are further developed, enabling them to take on greater responsibilities across all aspects of the school to build the school's leadership capacity
- their evaluation of the school's work is sharper in measuring its impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacques Szemalikowski  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your leadership team, middle leaders and a newly qualified teacher. I also met with two members of the governing body.

I met with a group of Year 2 pupils, and talked with a range of other pupils at lunchtime. I spoke to a number of parents at the school gate. I looked at a range of pupils' work. You accompanied me on visits to classes where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and further looked at their work. I listened to pupils from Year 2 read. I examined a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, including the single central register, child protection records and professional training certificates.

I scrutinised Ofsted's online survey for parents (98 responses) and associated commentary (98 comments), as well as responses to the staff survey (14 responses). I looked at reports from the local authority and the diocese, evaluating the work of the school. I examined the school's website and reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I also considered the school's self-evaluation of how well it is doing, its improvement priorities and assessment information for current pupils. Finally, I spoke by telephone to a representative from the school's management information systems provider.