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Mr Niall Gallagher
Headteacher
Saint Cecilia's Church of England School
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Dear Mr Gallagher

Short inspection of Saint Cecilia's Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018 with Annie Gammon, Ofsted Inspector, 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the inspection of the predecessor school. You and your team have created a caring, supportive and successful learning community where pupils attend regularly and achieve well. Pupils reported that they feel safe and well supported in school. The school's ethos is underpinned by the Christian faith and is much valued by parents and carers and pupils. As one parent said, summing up the views of others: 'Pupils are engaged, challenged, well-behaved and positive about both academic and personal learning.'

Your strong commitment to every pupil succeeding, irrespective of their background or ability, is shared by governors, leaders and staff. You believe passionately that the school makes a difference to pupils' future chances in life and use your detailed knowledge of the school to plan for future success.

Pupils want to learn and recognise that teachers are here to enable them to achieve well. They spoke positively to the inspectors about the dedication of their teaching staff. Pupils' calm and attentive behaviour and their thoughtful responses to teachers' questions demonstrate their strong focus on learning. Pupils value the many extra-curricular opportunities that they have at the school, such as sports and music groups. They also spoke very highly about how the well-stocked library motivates them to read regularly for pleasure. Its popularity with pupils can be seen by the number of pupils choosing to spend their social time there.

This attention that leaders and staff give to pupils' personal development and well-

being plays a pivotal role in their good academic outcomes. In 2017, GCSE results improved, with particularly strong outcomes in English and modern foreign languages, where pupils' progress was significantly above average. Overall, pupils' attainment was above the national average, particularly in English and mathematics. However, pupils' progress in science was not as strong. Leaders are making this a priority for improvement. Equally, although GCSE outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improved in 2017, you are rightly focusing on ensuring that these improvements are maintained.

The sixth form is a strength of the school and has a track record of success in recent years. Typically, students' progress is above average. It was well above average in 2017. This is very much down to leaders' single-minded focus on making sure that students are well prepared for the academic rigour of post-16 study. Leaders combine this with swift and targeted action where there are concerns about students' achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Together with the other leaders, you have established a strong culture of safeguarding and vigilance in which the safety and welfare of pupils is given top priority. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Recruitment of new staff is subject to diligent checks by senior staff and governors. Safeguarding training is up to date, which ensures that staff and governors are clear about their duties to promote pupils' welfare. Staff are vigilant to warning signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm.

Staff act promptly when dealing with safeguarding issues and refer any concerns without delay. Support from external professionals is also used in a timely manner and the school expects prompt responses in return. Staff do not shy away from escalating referrals where they do not feel external support is forthcoming or at the appropriate level. The vast majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are safe at school and that bullying is rare.

Inspection findings

- For the first line of enquiry, we agreed to focus on how effectively leaders are improving pupils' outcomes in science, particularly for the most able pupils. This is because in 2017, pupils' progress in science was not as strong as that found in mathematics and English.
- As your plans for improvement show, leaders have already identified raising standards in science as a priority, particularly for the most able pupils. Leaders have reflected carefully on what has worked well in the past for other groups of pupils. For example, in 2017, extra help put in place for middle-attaining pupils led to improvements in their progress. Leaders are now using this approach to support the most able pupils achieve to the best of their abilities.
- In response to the reform of the science GCSE examinations, leaders have

provided teachers with effective guidance so they understand how best to support progression in pupils' skills and knowledge. Wisely, you have formed informal partnerships with local schools to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' skills and understanding are accurate. This is enabling teachers to plan work that helps pupils to build on what they can already do well. Pupils are well motivated in their studies and produce work in books of a good standard. Nevertheless, science teaching does not routinely stretch the thinking of pupils, particularly the most able, and this hinders them from achieving the highest possible standards. Equally, inconsistencies remain in how effectively teachers use assessment information to target additional help to those pupils most at risk of underachievement, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Leaders are confident that their actions are securing improved outcomes for the most able pupils in science. However, they recognise that the changes put in place are not yet fully established and it is too soon to judge their impact.
- We next looked at how successful you and your leaders have been in improving the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders are rightly focusing on ensuring that poor attendance is not a barrier to the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Overall absence rates, including persistent absence rates, are below the national average. Leaders monitor the attendance of disadvantaged pupils rigorously. Those who are not attending regularly benefit from well-targeted support. For example, senior leaders mentor pupils to help them overcome any barriers and nurture positive attitudes to school. This has also played a role in the considerable reduction in fixed-term exclusions for disadvantaged pupils in 2017.
- Your focus on attendance and behaviour is complemented by a drive to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good gains in their academic learning across all areas of the curriculum. For example, in Spanish, sixth-form students volunteer to work alongside pupils to help them practise their skills and develop their confidence. In history, teachers ensure that pupils apply their good writing skills to record their ideas with increasing depth and maturity. As a result, in 2017, the progress of disadvantaged pupils improved overall and was broadly in line with the national average by the end of key stage 4. Leaders recognise that further improvements in teaching are needed to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve their best.
- Finally, we looked at how effectively leaders and teachers check pupils' progress. I particularly considered how you and your team use this information to enable all groups of pupils to make good gains in their skills and knowledge.
- Leaders are provided with the information about pupils who might be at risk of underachieving. When concerns are identified, leaders act promptly. They work effectively with subject leaders and teachers to provide pupils with the support they need to make good progress. For example, in mathematics at key stage 3, staff effectively address gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge at the earliest possible stage. Pupils' well-being and emotional needs are considered fully. When pupils experience difficulties, they benefit from good-quality guidance and care, including early help at the Bethany Centre.
- Leaders also use assessment information to support a culture of ambition and to

inform their plans for further improvement. Governors visit the school regularly and scrutinise helpful reports on pupils' progress. They hold leaders to account through challenging questions about what could be even better. This strategy has played an important role in improving pupils' GCSE outcomes at the end of key stage 4 in 2017 as well as maintaining students' above-average progress in the sixth form.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- science teaching routinely challenges the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to make substantial and sustained gains in their learning
- improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are maintained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wandsworth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Allott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and other staff
- a meeting with the chair of governors and other governors
- joint visits to classrooms with the headteacher and senior leaders
- scrutinies of pupils' work and discussions with pupils
- a scrutiny of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, safeguarding information and records, and data on pupils' achievement and attendance
- a review of the school's website
- consideration of the 142 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 97 written comments
- consideration of the 35 responses from staff and the 36 responses from pupils to Ofsted's surveys.