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Miss Ella Ryan  
Headteacher  
St Rose's Catholic Infants School  
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Dear Miss Ryan

### **Short inspection of St Rose's Catholic Infants School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 November 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. They have ensured that all areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection report have been addressed. You became headteacher on an acting basis in September 2017, having previously been deputy headteacher. You were confirmed as the substantive headteacher in November 2017. Since taking on the leadership of St Rose's, you have ensured that you have a very informed understanding of the school's strengths. The areas for further development that you have identified are firmly encompassed in the school improvement plan, which is being fully enacted.

Staff are highly supportive of you. All who responded to Ofsted's online survey say they enjoy working at the school and are proud to do so. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about your leadership and the quality of education provided by the school for their children. They are particularly appreciative of your approachability and that you are always there at the gate in the morning to greet them. They also like the recently introduced parent forum.

Governance at St Rose's is strong. Governors are skilled and know the school very well because they visit frequently. Consequently, they are able to both support and challenge leaders very effectively. A warm and caring atmosphere pervades all aspects of school life, reflecting the school's ethos statement that, 'we live, love and learn happily in our work and play as part of God's family'. Many parental comments

reflected this. For example, 'I feel a great sense of family at this school', 'St Rose's is an amazing school', 'a very welcoming school' and 'wonderful caring school'.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary at all times. In class, they show highly positive attitudes to learning. They are confident, articulate and keen to be involved in their learning. They are enthusiastic when responding to questions and clearly enjoy using the range of mathematical apparatus that is available to support their development of new mathematical concepts. Around the school and at breaktimes and lunchtimes pupils behave extremely well.

Classrooms across the school are bright and colourful and provide good support for learning. Pupils' writing is prominently displayed in the hall to celebrate their achievement. The curriculum is well designed and provides a range of opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. It is enriched by trips and interesting visitors and numerous after-school clubs, including dance, netball, gymnastics, martial arts and football. A high number of pupils also attend the breakfast club. Varied experiences provide pupils with a good understanding of life in modern Britain. For example, they vote to elect members of the school and eco councils. Older pupils in Year 2 support younger pupils at lunchtime.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. All staff and governors recognise their responsibility to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure, as well as teaching them how to keep themselves safe. Staff know pupils very well and are therefore quick to identify concerns, which are swiftly investigated. Highly organised and efficient systems ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All aspects of safeguarding have a high priority. Leaders and governors ensure that staff are kept up to date with all the required training, including on the 'Prevent' duty. Prominently displayed information means that all staff and visitors know the procedures for reporting any concerns they may have.

Pupils who I met during my visit told me they feel very safe. This view is echoed by parents. One typically commented: 'We are very happy how our daughter is looked after, taught and shaped at school. The whole staff is very kind, caring and helpful. Our daughter loves going to school.'

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry to establish if the school remains good was to determine how well current pupils are achieving. Published outcomes at the end of Year 2 have been above average for several years. In 2017, they were above average for both meeting and exceeding the expected age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School internal tracking information indicates that all pupils are making good progress from their starting points. The work in pupils' books evidences that this

information is accurate and supports your expectations that the high standards achieved at the end of Year 2 in 2017 and historically will be maintained.

- You have reorganised the way that phonics is taught following a slight dip in the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017. We saw pupils apply their knowledge about letters and the sounds they make appropriately to help them to read and spell. Teacher assessments indicate that the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard is likely to rise to above average this year.
- My next line of enquiry was to determine whether the school has good capacity to sustain continued improvement and to ensure that all areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been fully addressed.
- The previous inspection report identified that the school should strengthen subject leadership because some subject leaders were new in role. Since this time, there have been changes in class teachers and in subject and senior leadership. New subject leaders have received appropriate training opportunities to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics are knowledgeable about their roles and enthusiastic in carrying these out. They are well aware of strengths and areas for improvement in their subject areas. For example, in mathematics it was identified that the use of more mathematical apparatus could help to develop pupils' understanding of new concepts even more effectively. New resources have been purchased and training provided for all staff. In English, in addition to the new approach to teaching phonics, the need to improve handwriting and presentation has also been identified. This is being addressed through the introduction of a new whole school approach.
- Across the school, you provide many opportunities for staff to work together and learn from each other. Newer members of staff benefit from working with more experienced staff and taking on leadership responsibilities. This approach to developing more distributive leadership is strengthening the leadership capacity of the school and ensuring that there is good capacity for sustained improvement.
- The early years provision is well led. You have identified a need to improve opportunities to challenge the most able children when they are engaged in self-initiated rather than teacher-led activities. The improvement of role-play areas to support more independent learning and encourage writing has also been a focus. You are working with the local authority to continue to implement new approaches.
- In the Reception classes, we saw that these initiatives are already having a positive impact on children's learning. Both indoor and outside learning environments are well organised. There are lots of opportunities for children to engage with challenging writing and number activities during self-initiated time, including in role-play areas.
- At the time of the last inspection, leaders were also asked to ensure that teachers always provided sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Teachers' planning, the work in pupils' books and your internal tracking information indicate that this is indeed the case. This is supported by the fact that the proportion of pupils who

exceed age-related expectations at the end of Year 2 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

- My final line of enquiry was around how well the curriculum and teaching and learning opportunities meet the needs of all groups of learners. This was because, in 2017, although overall outcomes at the end of Year 2 were above average, there were large gaps between the achievement of boys and girls. The proportion of boys meeting and exceeding age-related expectations was much lower than that for girls and this gap was wider than that seen nationally.
- We discussed individual pupils in this cohort. A high proportion of the boys had special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils did not achieve age-related expectations at the end of Year 2. However, you shared tracking information with me that indicated that they had made good progress from their starting points.
- We discussed current tracking information which shows that boys and girls in both Year 1 and Year 2 are making good progress and that differences are diminishing. Work in pupils' books also evidences that this is the case.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- fully implement existing plans to improve pupils' handwriting and presentation in order to raise standards in writing still higher across the school
- further improve the early years foundation stage to ensure that when children are working on self-initiated activities there are always opportunities to engage in activities which deepen their learning
- continue to implement the new approaches to the teaching of phonics.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Beale  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I discussed the work of the school with you, subject leaders and two governors. I spoke with a representative from the local authority. You and I visited all classrooms together to observe teaching, learning and assessment and looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school and also talked more informally with pupils in lessons about their learning.

I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for the safe recruitment of staff. I considered a wide range of other documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its work and plans for improvement.

I took account of 122 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 112 free-text comments received electronically. I also spoke with 15 parents when they were delivering their children to school. I further considered 14 responses to the staff questionnaire and 13 responses to the pupil survey.