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Mrs Louise Freeman
Headteacher
Saint Clare's Primary School, A Catholic Voluntary Academy
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Dear Mrs Freeman

Short inspection of Saint Clare's Primary School, A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 April 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 have created an ethos in the school which supports, effectively, pupils' academic achievement and their well-being. The pupils are polite and well behaved. They demonstrate their positive attitudes in lessons and are keen to share with others what they are learning.

You engage parents and carers in a variety of valuable ways. Parents, grandparents and carers recently came into school and worked with their children in a very creative and successful craft session. The weekly award ceremony celebrates and promotes pupils' achievements, both in school and outside school. You instil in the pupils an understanding of what it means to be part of a community. For example, some pupils went to a local care home to sing to the residents at Christmas.

Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. You have ensured that teaching assistants have specific training to meet pupils' learning needs. Staff use effective questioning in lessons and encourage pupils to try their best.

The staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. There is a consistent approach to behaviour management within each class. The pupils know the high expectations of their teachers and respond well to these. They behave well both within class and around school and are keen and ready to learn at the start of each lesson.

The learning environment does not yet support pupils' learning and achievements effectively enough. You have begun the process of improvement. The mathematics team, for example, has developed a clear plan for improving classrooms to stimulate pupils' interests and provide them with guidance and clues to help them learn.

At the previous inspection, the need to refine teachers' planning in the early years and improve the balance between the different areas of learning was identified as an area to improve further. The early years classroom now effectively supports the learning of all the children. The teacher plans a range of engaging activities that both support and develop children's independence. Children are given opportunities to develop their skills across all areas of learning. The outside area supports the children's confidence, language and social skills as they explore the environment together. Children readily shared with me what they are learning. For example, one boy told me that he was practising writing his letters the right way around.

The previous inspection also identified that pupils needed to develop their mathematical skills across other subject areas. You recognise that this remains an area in need of continued attention. Practice is not yet consistent enough throughout the school. Additionally, my scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that at times there is too much repetition of the mathematical skills that pupils know well. Insufficient evidence was seen of pupils applying skills to solve challenging problems. This slows the progress of some pupils, particularly the most able.

Standards at the end of key stage 2 improved in 2017. However, pupils' achievement dipped at end of key stage 1. Strong strategies are in place to raise current pupils' progress in key stage 1. These actions are working and pupils are now making better progress than before. You and your staff are also working effectively to accelerate the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have a sound knowledge of the systems and procedures needed to keep pupils safe. All staff are fully trained and know how to support pupils if they need help. Staff are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They said that they would always refer any issues to the designated safeguarding lead in school. They are also confident to make a referral independently if required. Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the computer and searching the internet.

The majority of responses to the online survey, Parent View, stated that pupils are well looked after at school and that if there was a concern around bullying it was dealt with effectively. Pupils also supported this view. They said that staff resolved any issues or concerns quickly and effectively, that they were listened to and were well supported by their teachers. Pupils also said that they support each other in school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils support each other in lessons exceptionally well. They talk to each other about their learning, and resolve problems by talking them through before asking an adult for help.
- You recognise that in 2017, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities did not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. You and your staff are ensuring that progress for this group of pupils is accelerating. The special educational needs coordinator works tenaciously and effectively to ensure that the pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive the support they are entitled to. She has a precise overview of how well these groups of pupils are achieving. She uses this information well to hold teachers to account for the progress pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make in lessons and over time.
- Leaders ensure that teaching assistants are well trained. They are deployed expertly by teachers and provide effective support to pupils. They also play a valuable role in engaging parents in their children's education. Teaching assistants are passionate about the work they do. Their work has a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- There is not yet a consistency of approach across the curriculum to enable all pupils to apply their skills and knowledge in mathematics. The curriculum teams you have established have begun to tackle this issue, but it is too soon to judge the full impact of this work.
- The trust and the local governing body support the school well. The trust has high expectations of the leadership team. They work alongside you and monitor the progress made against the school's priorities. Governors hold the leadership team effectively to account.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use a consistent approach to the application of mathematical skills within lessons and provide greater opportunities for pupils to apply those skills
- teachers set more challenging tasks for pupils, especially in mathematics and for the most able pupils
- the school environment promotes pupils' learning more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Geraldine Crofts
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, pupils, parents, the leadership team, two trustees and two governors. You and I jointly observed teaching and learning in every class and we looked at pupils' books.

I read documents relating to school leadership, including minutes from meetings of the governing body, analyses of assessment data, and the school's development plan. I reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures and record of recruitment checks.

I considered the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 81 responses to the pupil survey and 16 responses to the survey of school staff.