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Mrs Colette Acres
Headteacher
St Bernadette Catholic Primary School
160 Long Lane
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Dear Mrs Acres

Short inspection of St Bernadette Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You are clearly ambitious for the school and are leading the school with energy and vision. Together with a hard-working leadership team, you have the full support and confidence of staff, parents, governors and pupils.

Although you have recently joined the staff, you have an accurate understanding of what the school does well, and where the school needs to improve. Senior and subject leaders are effective, and they support teachers well in classrooms. This has led to pupils making strong progress in phonics, mathematics and reading. Currently the school is correctly focused on improving the progress that pupils make in writing, and particularly their skills of composition and writing for a range of audiences.

Governors are knowledgeable and are routinely involved in the work of the school. They offer you strong strategic support. Working together, you have ensured that pupils gain a secure grasp of the basic skills expected for their age in reading and in mathematics, which are emerging strengths of the school. Leaders have made significant improvements to the school since the previous inspection. There have been notable improvements in teaching. Here, you have ensured that pupils are well taught by teachers who are hard-working and motivated to do their very best at St Bernadette's.

Teachers give pupils clear guidance on how to make their work better. This is

proving very helpful in ensuring that pupils, irrespective of their prior attainment, make good progress. Teachers' feedback includes a level of challenge for pupils to extend their learning. This is proving successful, so that an increasing number of pupils are starting to achieve the higher standard in end-of-key-stage tests, particularly in mathematics and reading.

Teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils' progress. They encourage pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, not to give up on work they find hard, and help them to overcome particular difficulties.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are complete. All checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in place. Clear systems exist for staff to make referrals when concerns arise, and subsequent actions are followed up effectively. Leaders work well with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive well-targeted support, when required. Staff training, including that related to the 'Prevent' duty, is up to date. Staff have a good knowledge of potential concerns within the local area. This increases their vigilance in spotting and reporting concerns about pupils' well-being.

The school has a very friendly atmosphere, and the pupils appreciate this. I observed and chatted with pupils, including during lunchtime, and they were relaxed and happy. They told me that they feel very safe in school, and that bullying simply doesn't exist at the school. They clearly enjoy coming to school and have great confidence that the staff work hard to support their education and well-being. Pupils behave very well and have positive attitudes towards the school.

Most parents appreciate the work that the school does to keep them well informed about pupils' progress. Several commented that their children really want to come to school each day. Because of this, the attendance of pupils is strong.

Inspection findings

- For the first line of enquiry, we agreed to look at key stage 2 pupils' progress in writing. This is because last year standards in writing were lower than in reading and mathematics. You have rightly identified this as a priority.
- The school has taken several important steps to improve writing. Teachers have received additional training and support from the local authority and the school's subject leader. This has given them greater confidence in teaching and assessing writing in a way that also ensures that pupils get more opportunities to write at length.
- The school's approach to the teaching of early writing is effective and pupils leave the early years with clear letter formation and a grasp of basic punctuation. These basic skills develop through Year 1 well, although this progress is not evenly maintained in Years 2, 3 and 4. As a result, some pupils enter Year 5 with

a handwriting style which is not yet secure.

- The teaching of writing has shown improvement. During the inspection I saw how information about the quality of teaching is tracked and feedback given to teachers that provides them with information that will improve their work. This has been helpful in improving teachers' approach to the teaching of writing. We saw evidence of this where pupils in Year 6 were guided by the teacher to fully understand the context of an autobiographical account written by a prisoner of war that linked well to pupils' history topic. However, not all writing seen in other subjects is of a similar quality. The work that you have done to improve this area should remain a focus, so that the improvements continue and are reflected in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2.
- The second line of enquiry was to check whether pupils of different abilities make the best progress that they can. In lessons, teachers are aware of the need to plan work that meets the needs of pupils of all abilities. Teaching is successful, and pupils of all abilities make good progress.
- Teachers make very good use of additional adults to work with pupils. Where time and resources are used carefully, to maximise learning opportunities, the best progress is made, particularly for the least able pupils. Often, in lessons, the most able learners are able to extend and deepen their understanding. The Year 5 pupils were all very involved in the religious education lesson seen about the creation story, for example, and this helped to make it a memorable experience for them.
- Finally, we looked at science and subjects other than English and mathematics. In 2017, standards in science were below the national average in key stage 2 and so we were curious to look at this area. The school's science leader has developed the curriculum plan in the light of better use of assessment to ensure that this is unlikely to happen again.
- Some subjects, such as music and physical education, are taught by specialist teachers. In these subjects, pupils are achieving well. In other subjects, such as art and science, work is rich and varied so pupils also achieve well. Pupils are proud of the practical skills they have developed while working scientifically and have great enthusiasm for this area. Pupils' sketch books show how well their skills in art develop over time. Teachers make very good use of home learning projects to engage with parents and carers and extend pupils further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- writing across the curriculum is of a good quality to ensure that pupils continue to take pride in it
- handwriting is developed consistently in key stage 1 and key stage 2 in line with the school's adopted policy.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors, the director of education for the archdiocese of Westminster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Hillingdon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim McLoughlin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held several meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I met with two governors and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I held informal discussions with parents in the playground, and considered the 53 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and the 24 written comments on the free-text facility. You and the deputy headteacher accompanied me on visits to classrooms. I talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the 78 responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey. I looked at pupils' books and listened to a range of pupils read as they worked in lessons. 28 staff surveys were also completed and used to gauge their opinion about working at the school. I also evaluated a range of school documentation, including school development plans, safeguarding records and information about current pupils' achievement.