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Mrs M Lightfoot
Headteacher
St Oswald's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Lightfoot

Short inspection of St Oswald's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 June 2014.

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 provided strong, effective and determined leadership, establishing a talented and enthusiastic team of senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. Leaders know the strengths of teaching in school, and are constantly striving to make further improvements. You have ensured that leaders are skilled at rigorously monitoring and evaluating the effect of new strategies implemented in teaching. As a result, good-quality teaching is enabling pupils to make great strides in their learning, and fulfil their true potential. All adults within the school's caring and inclusive community share the same passion and drive to succeed, and are determined to provide every opportunity for pupils to thrive.

You have succeeded in building a skilled and settled teaching team. Staff morale, their participation in delivering the school's vision and their strong work ethic underpin the school's continuing improvement. Staff value, and are skilled at, finding and accessing high-quality professional development and training. High levels of trust pervade the school, allowing an openness to share successes, and result in a consistent approach to teaching across the curriculum. These high expectations result in high-quality presentation and handwriting by pupils in books and engaging and attractive displays in classes and shared areas.

Consistently strong teaching is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. From work seen in books and your own accurate and detailed assessment and tracking information, a large majority of pupils in each year group are on track to reach

standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The vast majority are making strong progress in their learning. Although the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in their learning is accelerating quickly, differences remain in the standards of attainment that they reach compared to other pupils nationally and to most of their non-disadvantaged classmates. Pupils write often and at length, and enjoy reading class texts linked to the topic they are studying. You have ensured that a significant emphasis has been placed on ensuring that pupils' mathematical calculation skills and fluency in number are strong. You acknowledge that pupils' skills in mathematical reasoning are not yet embedded.

You have made pupils' all-round development a high priority, ensuring that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This is clear by observing pupils' exemplary behaviour, their sense of care and support for each other, their pride in work and a tangible desire to succeed. They are shining ambassadors for their school. Pupils benefit from a curriculum that is planned, tailored and adapted to meet their needs and interests. A wide range of trips and visits are made across the region to places of historical, geographical, scientific or artistic significance. Subject-specific skills are clearly mapped across each topic, enabling teachers to assess pupils' progress accurately, but systems to track these assessments are not yet developed.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All procedures and records are of high quality and are regularly updated by the administration officer. Staff and governor training is thorough and up to date, and registers of staff training are completed diligently. Access to well-written policies and guidance ensures that all adults have a secure understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

Pupils care for each other, and appreciate older pupils' role as playground buddies who attend to any incident and lead games with younger pupils. The curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety. Pupils have full trust in their teachers and teaching assistants who look after them and report feeling safe all of the time. They are particularly knowledgeable about keeping safe online.

Inspection findings

- You have ensured that there is a consistency of approach to the teaching of mathematics across the school. Pupils in Year 2 were confidently adding two-digit numbers to two-digit numbers using a range of strategies, and in Year 1 pupils used practical apparatus to demonstrate their understanding of number bonds to 20. Pupils in Year 6 confidently calculated the area of different triangles, and were able to provide a clear rationale for the method they had chosen. The purposeful and skilled role played by the mathematics leader has been key in ensuring that this subject remains a strength of the school. Access to good-quality training that is shared with staff, visits to other schools to see strong practice and investment in a range of new equipment have further strengthened

teaching. You acknowledge that pupils' skills in mathematical reasoning do not yet meet that of calculation and fluency in number.

- As a result of the whole school community's attention to detail and dedication to assure all pupils' welfare, safeguarding is highly effective. You have worked hard to put the school's work to foster pupils' personal development, welfare and spirituality at the very heart of all the school does. You have ensured that relationships in school are strong, expectations are high and there are high levels of trust between adults and pupils. Pupils are polite, caring, considerate and friendly to each other and to visitors, are excellent conversationalists, and demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning and high standards of behaviour. Very occasional minor misdemeanours are meticulously recorded, but almost all are verbal disagreements. Pupils speak clearly about the need to attend school regularly to ensure that not a moment to learn is lost.
- Pupil premium spending is managed effectively to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils benefit from a range of support programmes, skilfully delivered by teaching assistants and teachers. This support is regularly evaluated for its impact on pupils' learning and their well-being, and amended or changed as a result. Work seen in pupils' books shows excellent productivity, good standards of presentation and neat, joined handwriting. The positive effect of this support is seen through the improving achievement made by current disadvantaged pupils across the school. However, differences remain in their achievement compared with that of other pupils. The school acknowledges that further work is required to raise the attainment of this group of pupils, including embedding systems to improve their rates of progress in learning from an early age.
- You responded swiftly to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Pupils are crystal clear on the steps they need to take in order to be successful. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, responding extremely positively in questionnaires you have sent out, and in their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. Parents benefit from a detailed overview of each new topic undertaken by a class, giving clear information on the subjects to be studied. You and your staff team have worked hard to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs and interest of pupils. Curriculum subjects are enriched by imaginative use of the many north-east areas and places of interest. Teachers are clear on the subject-specific skills covered within each topic, and increasingly skilled in accurately assessing them. You agree that systems to track these assessments are not yet developed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current strategies and actions continue to diminish quickly the differences in the standards of attainment achieved by disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils nationally and in school
- systems for tracking the progress of pupils in subject-specific skills across the

curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics are embedded

- pupils' skills in mathematical reasoning are consolidated and enhanced.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for South Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Scott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the early years leader and the science leader. In addition I met with the mathematics lead and the special educational needs co-ordinator. I also met with the administration officer, a group of governors and the local authority school improvement adviser. Together, you and I visited lessons in key stages 1 and 2 and reviewed pupils' workbooks in lessons and a sample of pupils' books from across the school. I spoke to pupils about their work and their views of the school. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime. A range of documents was considered relating to safeguarding. I examined the school development plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and its assessment and tracking of current pupils' progress and attainment. I also scrutinised pupils' achievement in the 2016 and 2017 statutory assessments, the 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Parent View, and the school's website.