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Mrs Pauline Johnstone
Headteacher
St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Johnstone

Short inspection of St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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. Leaders, governors, teachers, teaching assistants and, indeed, all adults connected with school share the same passion and drive to succeed. There is a determination to provide every opportunity for pupils to thrive within the school's caring and inclusive community. You have provided strong and effective leadership, establishing a talented and enthusiastic team of senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. Staff morale is high, exemplified by the enthusiasm with which all classroom-based staff dressed as characters from books during the inspection, which was held on a carried-forward 'World Book Day'.

Leaders know the school inside out, and are constantly striving to make further improvements. You have ensured that all leaders are skilled at rigorously monitoring and evaluating the effect of new strategies in teaching, exemplified by the rapid and sustained improvements in mathematics. As a result, good-quality teaching is enabling pupils to make great strides in their learning, and fulfil their true potential. School improvement planning is based on accurate and extensive self-evaluation. Actions are closely matched to areas identified as needing to be improved or strengthened further. You acknowledge that not all planned actions have specific and measurable outcomes which allow an accurate assessment of their impact, and thereby enable governors to hold senior leaders more rigorously to account.

You have ensured that issues raised at the last inspection have been tackled swiftly and effectively. Consistently strong teaching is having a positive effect on pupils'

achievement as they are clear about what they have to achieve and have good examples of how to do it. From work seen in books and your own accurate and detailed assessment and tracking information of pupils' attainment, it is evident that a large majority of pupils in each year group are on track to reach standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' progress in writing is accelerating quickly, including in key stage 1, following effective actions taken following the last inspection. You acknowledge that further opportunities for pupils to write at length are not yet provided consistently across different year groups in school.

Information from the most recent statutory data shows that pupils made strong progress across key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Their rates of progress were above those found nationally, and were especially strong in mathematics. The vast majority of current pupils appear to be making strong progress in their learning. You acknowledge that the school's current systems to track the achievement of pupils lacks the capacity to accurately track assessments of pupils' progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.

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' excellent behaviour, their support for each other and the pride they take in their work. There are well-established systems to support any pupils who are upset, worried or distressed. The role played by the family support worker has been pivotal in ensuring that pupils are ready to learn and have no issues blocking their path to success. You have also made improving pupils' rates of attendance a priority. A number of actions, led effectively by the assistant headteacher and the family support worker, have improved pupils' rates of attendance and reduced the proportion that is persistently absent.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Given the size of the school, you have ensured that three adults have completed the designated person for safeguarding training. Staff and governor safeguarding training is up to date, including training to ensure that recruitment procedures are watertight. All procedures and records are of good quality and are regularly updated and reviewed by the senior leadership team. An extensive and detailed online system ensures that absolutely nothing is missed that may affect pupils' safety and well-being. Access to well-written policies and guidance ensures that all adults have a secure understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

All staff ensure that pupils are safe and have opportunities to thrive. Work completed by the assistant headteacher and the family support worker is having a significantly positive impact on pupils' well-being and attendance. 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 knowledgeable about keeping safe online and how to stay safe

when not at school.

Inspection findings

- You have ensured that the whole-school community has been proactive and dogged in its approach to tackling weaknesses and further improving the quality of teaching across school. Leaders are reflective and constantly challenge themselves, addressing and tackling perceived weaknesses immediately. A culture of being outward facing, sourcing and securing high-quality professional development and further qualifications, has enhanced staff expertise. Strong and effective partnership work with other schools has enabled staff to share the most effective practice, and check assessments of pieces of writing work with local colleagues. Leaders communicate a perceptible sense of drive and ambition to be the best, underpinned by a keen enthusiasm which clearly rubs off on all staff, as seen in my discussion with the mathematics and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) leaders. Teaching has improved significantly and pupils' progress is accelerating. Pupils know their targets and how to achieve them, although you acknowledge that opportunities to write at length are variable across the school and lack consistency from class to class.
- 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 and demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning and high standards of behaviour. Occasional minor misdemeanours are meticulously recorded in the school's detailed online system. Case studies demonstrate the school's determination to pursue help and support for any child or family in need. Pupils report feeling very safe in school, and the vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire stated that their child was well looked after and was happy at school.
- Improving pupils' rates of attendance and reducing the proportion who are persistently absent have been, and continue to be, high priorities for the school. As a result of extensive and significant work undertaken by the assistant headteacher and the family support worker, rates of attendance have improved year-on-year. There are a range of incentives and rewards for good attendance, with increasingly positive relationships with parents underpinning the school's good work in this area. You acknowledge that there can be no slackening of effort in encouraging good attendance as a very small number of disadvantaged pupils are still persistently absent.
- The school's focus on improving pupils' rates of progress in writing has been very successful. Work in books shows a wide range of writing activities in every year group, with a number of extended pieces of work. Scrutiny of religious education and humanities workbooks also reveals a raft of writing completed by pupils in most year groups. You acknowledge that there is not yet a consistent approach across school in providing opportunities for pupils to complete open-ended, unrestricted pieces of writing as there are variations between some year groups.

Pupils' progress in writing across key stage 2 rose significantly in 2017 to levels above those found nationally, although they are still not as strong as those found in reading and mathematics. You have detailed plans in place to further consolidate and strengthen pupils' achievement in writing, with close ties being made between the teaching of reading and writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current tracking systems are refined to allow leaders access to information on the rates of progress current pupils make in their learning
- planned whole-school actions have specific and measurable outcomes that allow leaders and governors to make an accurate assessment of their impact
- pupils continue to have opportunities to undertake open-ended writing activities to consolidate and develop their writing skills.

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 Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Scott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, and the leaders of mathematics, the early years and STEM. I also met with the office manager and the family welfare officer. In addition, I met a group of governors and the local authority school improvement partner. Alongside you, I visited lessons in each key stage. I reviewed a sample of pupils' workbooks in lessons and a small sample of pupils' books for subjects other than English and mathematics. 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 improvement 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 64 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the school's website.