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20 March 2018

Miss Joanne Sands  
Headteacher  
St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Murphy Crescent  
Bishop Auckland  
County Durham  
DL14 6QH

Dear Miss Sands

### **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.

Based on the evidence available during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment as headteacher in January 2017, you have worked with your deputy headteacher to raise expectations and improve the quality of leadership and governance. You have introduced systems to provide more regular checks on teaching and the quality of work in pupils' books. Teachers are now more accountable for the progress of the pupils in their classes. You have also worked with teachers to raise expectations and pupils' attainment, securing higher standards at key stage 1 and particularly at key stage 2 in 2017.

You have developed the roles of senior and middle leaders. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have increased responsibility for developing improvement strategies and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. In English, new reading programmes and an emphasis upon editing skills are beginning to influence improvements in reading and writing. Your mathematics leader is exploring new strategies to increase opportunities for pupils to apply their reasoning skills. However, these developments, particularly in mathematics, remain at an early stage and middle leaders are not sufficiently skilled in evaluating the effect of initiatives on pupils' progress.

You are developing a new assessment system to track pupils' progress more

effectively. Teachers submit more regular information to help you to track progress and modify teaching and interventions to support better progress. This system is also enabling teachers to develop a better awareness of the demands of the new national curriculum as they identify more closely the skills and knowledge assessed in each year group. This emerging system is not yet consistently implemented across all year groups. On occasions, leaders do not review pupils' progress with teachers in a sufficiently timely manner.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching, with a particular focus upon the teaching of phonics and improving challenge in the early years. Teachers and teaching assistants are now much more adept in teaching pupils key reading skills. In three of the last four years since the previous inspection, over 90% of pupils have achieved the required standard in the phonics screening check. Improved planning and a more productive use of the learning environment has led to consistent improvement in children's progress in the early years. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above that seen nationally. Leaders were also advised to improve assessment processes and the effect of improvement activities. Actions in these areas have been less successful, although you have promptly responded to these issues since your arrival and introduced systems that are beginning to support improvement.

You and your team have developed a respectful ethos where pupils and teachers interact positively with one another. Pupils demonstrated high levels of courtesy and respect throughout the inspection and articulated their thoughts in clear and considered ways. You enrich pupils' experience with a range of trips, visits and special events, such as your Harry Potter festival and the current mission activities in school. These opportunities are valued by pupils as they help them to develop their self-confidence and their social skills.

Governors are committed to the success of the school and to the wider community. They appreciate the extra rigour that you have brought as headteacher. Governors have the appropriate expertise to hold leaders to account. The governing body embraces training opportunities to enable it to examine data more thoroughly. It is now more actively involved in monitoring pupils' progress, and further enhancements to the assessment system will help it to do this more effectively. Governors' systems to evaluate the effect of leaders' use of additional funding, for example the use of pupil premium funding, are less well-developed.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A strong safeguarding ethos runs throughout the school. Leaders, teachers and members of the governing body are committed to the welfare of the children in their care. Leaders make appropriate checks on the suitability of adults working at the school and are suitably trained in safer recruitment. Leaders ensure that staff receive up-to-date training on a range of safeguarding issues. Senior leaders pursue concerns over pupils' welfare thoroughly and record them assiduously.

Pupils spoken with said that they feel safe in school and the vast majority of their parents and carers agree. They said that bullying is rare and that staff are highly effective in addressing any potential instances of bullying. Pupils were able to discuss the actions they could take to remain safe, for example the actions needed to stay safe online and to avoid the potential threats caused by strangers.

## **Inspection findings**

- Your subject leader for English is introducing new approaches to develop pupils' aptitudes in writing. Pupils are given opportunities to write in a range of genres and build their writing stamina through increasing access to extended writing tasks. Pupils are using editing skills to improve the accuracy of their work. However, rates of progress remain variable, particularly at key stage 1. Pupils are not consistently able to apply their grammatical knowledge to their extended writing.
- You and your team have responded with increasing purpose to the national curriculum at key stage 2. In 2017, a much higher proportion of pupils achieved expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are building upon this success with current pupils to secure improving rates of progress. However, this progress is not consistent and variability remains in reading and mathematics between year groups.
- You and your team have raised standards at key stage 1. In 2017, the proportions of pupils who achieved expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics were either in line with or above those seen nationally. School performance information suggests current pupils are continuing to make improving progress. Despite this, the proportions of pupils working at a greater depth of understanding remain below those seen nationally, particularly in writing.
- Leaders have used pupil premium funding to support a range of initiatives, including pupils' communication and language development and to provide social and emotional support. Disadvantaged pupils achieved considerably stronger outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, with the proportions achieving expected standards in line with those seen nationally. There are signs that these differences are continuing to diminish across many year groups. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving a greater depth of understanding remains well below that seen nationally. Too much variance continues in specific year groups in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders are working more closely with the attendance team from the local authority to challenge and support families where pupils have lower rates of attendance. Where this has been successful, close dialogue with families has contributed to significant improvement. In 2016/17, rates of persistent absence reduced for all pupils and attendance improved for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, the overall picture remains too variable and leaders have not secured sufficient improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils whose absence remains too high.
- Leaders and teachers have sustained consistent improvement in early years

provision. The proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development has risen to a level above that seen nationally. Children are making good progress as a result of effective routines and a richer learning environment that supports their learning and their social development.

- Pupils' progress in subjects such as science and the humanities is not strong as they are not given enough opportunities to explore the curriculum in these subjects in sufficient depth.
- You have created a calm and purposeful learning environment where the vast majority of pupils approach their learning in a positive and productive manner. Pupils are polite and considerate and respond well to school routines and rules. You and your team demonstrate high levels of care and concern for pupils' welfare.
- You and your team have established a variety of enrichment activities that have developed pupils' social awareness and their self-confidence. Pupils raise money for a range of charities and develop an awareness of the needs of others, such as recent projects to explore the problems faced by refugees.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- implement new systems to check pupils' progress and the quality of teaching consistently to swiftly address underachievement and better hold teachers to account for pupils' progress
- improve the quality of teaching to increase opportunities for pupils to work at greater depths of understanding in English and mathematics across all year groups
- strengthen the curriculum so that pupils acquire appropriate skills and knowledge in subjects such as science, geography and history
- improve the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils by closely monitoring the effect of additional funding and support strategies.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

As part of the inspection, I explored the actions taken by leaders to improve pupils' progress at both key stage 1 and 2, with a particular focus upon writing. I also looked at the actions that leaders were taking to improve progress for disadvantaged pupils and to raise overall rates of attendance.

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders. I also spoke with four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked with pupils less formally in lessons. I also held a telephone conversation with an education development partner from the local authority. I looked at learning in lessons with you. I looked at pupils' work in books and folders. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including the school's self-evaluation, behaviour and attendance records and assessment information. I examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record. I took into account 14 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and nine parental free-text responses. I also took into account 32 responses to the pupil questionnaire and eight responses to the staff questionnaire.