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23 April 2018

Mr Jamie Carroll
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Carroll

Short inspection of St Bede's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 October 2013

This school continues to be good.

As the new headteacher, you have responded swiftly to ensure that the good quality of education in the school has been maintained since the last inspection. When you took up post, you quickly identified the school's strengths and the areas which still needed work to improve the school. You appointed a new and increasingly effective leadership team to support this drive and have recently added a new deputy headteacher to strengthen this work. As a team, you have swiftly developed a system for looking at the work of teachers and pupils' books. As a result, you now have an accurate view of the actions required to make further improvements. You have built positive relationships with your staff, who share your commitment and high expectations. Governors have welcomed your vision for the school and are beginning to have a significantly sharper view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, they have begun to explore why pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities sometimes make slower progress.

Parents are very supportive and have recognised the changes you have brought to the school. In my discussions with small groups of parents, and in their responses to Parent View, almost all would recommend the school to others. One parent noted, 'St Bede's has been strong, efficient and consistent, fun and enriching' and others praised your increased visibility in the school community. Parents feel that their children are effectively taught, are happy to come to school and are looked after well.

Pupils are similarly positive about the school and its work with them. 'A great school

where we learn all the time,' was the view expressed by one pupil who summed up pupils' enjoyment at being at St Bede's. Pupils have taken on board the school's values, which are closely linked to those of its foundation in the Roman Catholic church. Pupils are typically polite and kind to each other and to the adults they work with. They work hard, with positive attitudes, taking considerable pride and care in their work.

Following the inspection in 2013, the previous leadership team was asked to improve teaching by ensuring that pupils worked at a faster pace and that the work was more accurately targeted. You have picked up this challenge and have correctly evaluated that, while you have improved aspects of this, it remains a focus for your work. We observed pupils who, by Year 6, produce effective, detailed and highly focused writing. This is due to your insistence on teachers promoting the highest expectations. I also looked at a broader range of subjects and topic books where pupils' scientific knowledge was particularly strong. This is due to an increased focus on the skills and knowledge pupils need to work scientifically and the effective subject knowledge which you have placed at the centre of learning.

Occasionally, expectations of what pupils can achieve in mathematics are still too low and pupils spend time on activities which have limited challenge. This is because some lessons repeat key ideas, despite pupils' books showing they have understood. This slows progress and occurs when teachers are not totally clear about the progression in learning or have not assessed pupils accurately. You are rightly prioritising this aspect to improve outcomes for pupils. You are well supported in this by middle leaders who clearly understand what effective progression is and model this in their teaching.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have reinforced the key messages and ensured that, with your new designated safeguarding leader, the whole school community recognises the importance of keeping children safe. Staff receive advice and information about safeguarding as part of their induction. This means that staff are well informed and know about the school's processes for spotting signs of concern. Systems are in place to ensure that all adults receive the training they need. Pre-employment checks and recruitment practices comply with regulations and a list of these checks is managed efficiently. You work effectively with outside agencies in order to keep pupils safe.

Pupils talked confidently about how the school teaches them to keep safe. For example, they talked about lessons about online safety and a recent visit by the local fire service. All pupils with whom I spoke agreed that they would be happy to talk to adults in the school if they had any concerns and were particularly confident that adults would listen to and help them. Pupils say that behaviour is good and occurrences of discriminatory language are infrequent. They describe their school as a place where 'friends take care of each other'. As a result, bullying is a rare event.

Inspection findings

- During this visit, as well as evaluating the improvements from the previous inspection, I focused on four key themes. First, I looked at why progress for Year 6 pupils in writing fell last year. Looking at books and watching pupils learning across the school shows that you have begun to successfully address this. Your English leader uses the school's records of assessments diligently to monitor writing skills, and is able to show that current pupils are making better progress. This was seen when Year 6 pupils graphically described what it felt like to fly, like Harry Potter, on a broomstick. Their work was built on other similarly themed work, helping to rapidly improve pupils' imaginative vocabulary and depth of writing. The tracking of pupils' achievement from their starting points helps to highlight where pupils fall behind. However, there is still work to do on ensuring that teachers' assessments are consistent. By checking assessments with other teachers in the school and with other schools locally, leaders are ensuring that these are increasingly accurate.
- We looked together at why pupils' progress generally in the school was not as strong as their attainment. Your own evaluation of the school's work closely matches the inspection findings. You had already identified that a few teachers are not always clear about the progression of skills which would help them to move pupils on to the next steps. In one or two cases, teachers also repeat work to ensure it is completely understood when evidence indicates they could move pupils on more quickly. As a result, you had already tasked your subject leaders to help teachers to be clearer about the sequence of subject-specific knowledge and skills and to improve teachers' assessment skills.
- I also looked at the provision for children who have SEN and/or disabilities. You acted promptly to appoint a leader to coordinate this aspect while your special educational needs leader is absent. The temporary special educational needs leader has made an effective start on reviewing the provision for this group of pupils across the school. There are now appropriate plans in place for most pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Resources are increasingly targeted well to help these pupils. An identified governor meets regularly with the new leader. An increasing number of pupils in this group now make progress in line with their peers and some are on track to meet the expected attainment levels for their age group. Nonetheless, you recognise the need to continue to improve this aspect.
- Lastly, I looked at the impact of the governing body on their statutory responsibilities for the pupils in their care. Governors are clear that your new, inclusive leadership style highlighted gaps in their knowledge about the school. Recent changes in the information they receive from you and new appointments have improved their capacity to hold the school to account. You have welcomed governors into the school and as a result they know more about how writing is being improved and how decisions are made about the performance of teachers and their pay. You are now working with the chair of the governing body to ensure that reports and meetings are targeted on the actions which will most improve the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers make accurate assessments and develop a clear view of the sequence of skills and knowledge in each subject in order to set appropriately challenging tasks and accelerate pupils' progress across the curriculum
- pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive further support so that their progress continues to improve
- governors monitor the school regularly and hold leaders to account for key improvements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Portsmouth (RC), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Cousins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited classrooms, observing pupils at work and talking to them about their learning. I held meetings with you, your senior and middle leaders and three members of the governing body. I held a phone call with a representative of the local authority. I looked at a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation information and a range of policies. Parents' views were gathered by speaking to them at the start of the school day, and through the 62 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the accompanying free-text comments. I spoke to pupils in lessons, met a mixed group of Year 4 and Year 6 pupils and looked at the 72 responses to the pupil online survey. The 18 responses to the staff questionnaire were also taken into account. I also looked at information about pupils' progress and pupils' work in English, mathematics, science and other subjects across the curriculum.