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Mrs Sue Barber
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Barber

Short inspection of Saint Joseph's Catholic Primary School, The Borough

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school has a strong ethos, based upon its Christian values. Pupils and families are supported well by the school because staff appreciate the diverse nature and needs of the local community.

With the majority of pupils at the school speaking English as an additional language, the school gives particular emphasis to the development of speaking, reading and writing. You recognise that early literacy support is needed to bridge gaps in pupils' learning. The high profile given to literacy development across the school is also seen through a variety of subjects. For example, in science, pupils have written poems to share their knowledge, allowing them to practise and improve their non-fiction writing skills.

Your school self-evaluation is thorough and an appropriate development plan has been put in place. Leaders are tasked with implementing school developments and regularly meet their targets. This accurate self-evaluation and planning have had a positive effect on the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. For example, the school's approach to teaching science has been transformed and pupils are now more able to gain knowledge by taking part in exciting and thought-provoking experiments.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, with the safety and well-being of pupils having the highest priority. Pupils, including those educated off-site, are monitored closely to ensure their well-being and safety.

The governing body regularly audits safeguarding records to ensure that all statutory safeguarding duties are completed. Governors and leaders are trained in both safeguarding and safer recruitment. They ensure that appropriate staffing checks are made and that all safeguarding training is up to date. All staff react quickly to any concerns and inform pupils on how to stay safe.

Inspection findings

- At our initial meeting, we agreed that the inspection would focus on two key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to look at the school's work to improve pupils' outcomes in reading. This was because, although broadly average, pupils' progress and attainment were lower in reading than in writing and mathematics. Leaders had also identified reading as an area for improvement.
- Your arrangements for tracking pupils' progress have contributed to improvements in reading. You have developed the roles of middle leaders so that they are confident in holding their teams to account for the quality of their work. They set high expectations and make sure that teachers' information on the progress pupils make is consistent and accurate. Staff meet regularly to discuss individual pupils' progress. Where necessary, additional support is provided for any pupil who falls behind. For example, after-school phonics lessons are used to help pupils catch up with early reading skills.
- Specific strategies adopted by the school include the introduction of daily supported reading, with all staff committed to the project. Teachers are also using rich texts so that pupils deepen their understanding and link their reading and writing. The school has communicated to parents and carers the need for a strong start in reading to ensure long-term progress in all subjects. The parents who spoke with me recognised the benefits of the school's emphasis on regular reading at home.
- Inspection evidence demonstrated that pupils are making rapid progress in phonics and most are now making the expected progress in reading. As you acknowledge, there is still work to do to improve the progress of some lower-attaining pupils.
- The second line of enquiry chosen was pupils' outcomes in mathematics in key stage 1. Pupils generally make good progress from low starting points so that, by the end of key stage 2, their attainment is close to the national average standards. However, a lower proportion than found nationally reached the greater-depth standard at key stage 2.
- Middle leaders closely monitor teachers' work and quickly identify areas that need to be developed. Leaders provide support and training and check that

improvements are made swiftly. These actions have led to more consistent approaches and better-quality mathematics teaching. For example, teachers are using a mathematics resource to make teaching more challenging, adding a competitive element which pupils clearly enjoy.

- Teachers routinely promote pupils' basic numeracy skills. Younger pupils show a clear understanding of how to work out fractions, for example. Pupils are keen to learn from their mistakes. Teachers apply this resilience and commitment to enable pupils to improve their mathematics skills.
- Pupils in key stage 1 are ambitious to do well in mathematics and are making good progress, as shown by their work in classrooms and in their books. They are establishing good foundations for work in key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in reading continues to improve so that it is as good as in mathematics and writing
- more pupils are challenged to reach the greater-depth standard in mathematics at key stage 1.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jason Hughes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and governors of the school. Members of the senior leadership team joined me in observing lessons. I heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 reading and scrutinised a range of school documents, including policies and safeguarding records, the school's website, governors' minutes and a range of pupils' workbooks. I also had conversations with parents in the playground and pupils around the school.