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8 June 2018

Ms Nicola Kane
Headteacher
St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School
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Dear Ms Kane

Short inspection of St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 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 November 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 are an inspiring headteacher with a passion for providing an inclusive and caring environment for learning. You and your senior staff work cohesively and are well respected by staff, pupils and most parents. One parent said, 'My child loves school. If she is happy, I'm happy.' The leadership team provides you with energetic and effective support. Your work is valued and respected by staff, who share your vision for the school's continued success.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They play and work harmoniously and respond well to adults' consistently high expectations. Pupils are very familiar with these expectations. Pupils are rightly proud of their school, describing it as 'the best school in the world'. They know and respect the school's Christian ethos which underpins many aspects of school life. Pupils also relish the responsibilities they are given, such as being on the junior leadership team or being a farm ranger.

Leaders identified that the outdoor environment could be enhanced to provide pupils with further enrichment to their curriculum and life skills. The farm, which is part of the stimulating outdoor learning environment you have created, is used to teach pupils to look after animals and plants. Pupils enjoy their practical learning. The vegetable patches and rose gardens are largely looked after by pupils attending your breakfast club and after-school provision, which encourages improved attendance and social skills.

Governors offer an appropriate balance of challenge and support. They know you value their input and act on their advice. They play their full role in ensuring the school has a strong safeguarding culture. They know their school well and share your high aspirations for pupils and staff. Governors are right to have every confidence in the work of school leaders.

All parents who spoke to me at the gate were positive about the school and the changes that have been made since the previous inspection. The majority who responded to Parent View were also supportive of the school's work. However, some parents do not feel they receive effective communication from the school. Consequently, some parents are not aware of the good work carried out by the school. You know this is a priority and it is in your development plan.

You have worked hard to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Middle leaders plan curriculum coverage across the school and support each other in giving advice to sustain the quality of teaching and learning. This is resulting in a broad curriculum being offered. Pupils, including the most able, are challenged to make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The impact of this work is evident in pupils' continued high achievement across the school. A large number of current pupils are working at standards above those typical for their age nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leaders, including governors, have ensured that there are not only effective practices and processes in place, but also a deep culture of safeguarding. Documents and records of pupils causing concern are well maintained. You put in place necessary support for pupils who need it. You work well with other agencies, holding them to account when required.

Staff are well trained and kept up to date with relevant changes throughout the year. They know how to refer a concern and they know the signs to look for if a pupil is at risk. Adults know pupils exceptionally well, which enables them to put in place appropriate support.

Pupils are safe in school. They say they feel safe and they act in a safe manner. They display the confidence that comes with a strong sense of security. They know what bullying is and say it is very rare. Well-kept records confirm this. Pupils know they can talk with an adult they trust if they need to do so.

Nearly all parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for. Pupils know how to stay safe online. They enjoy visits from the police and visiting the fire station. Pupils have worked with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to increase their awareness of their own safety and to raise funds for the charity. Pupils reliably follow rules and use guidance put in place to keep them safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that I would explore how successful leaders are at reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. This is because, while it improved in 2017, persistent absence remained above the national average. Attendance overall has been in line with national figures.
- Leaders have taken very effective action and, as a result, pupils' absence has fallen below national figures, as has persistent absence. You identify pupils who need to improve their attendance and offer them the right support to do so.
- Your early years team carries out home visits when children are preparing to start school. This is developing a culture and habit of attending school regularly, building on early established relationships with families. You ensure that this work continues as pupils move through the key stages. In lessons, pupils are taught about the importance of attending school regularly. You ensure that pupils' good or improving attendance is rewarded in celebration assemblies. Parents who are supporting good attendance receive letters of thanks from the leadership team.
- My second line of enquiry was to assess how effectively you and your leaders have improved the quality of early years provision. This is because, at the previous inspection, it was judged to require improvement. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year has also remained in line with that seen nationally.
- Because of skilful and innovative leadership, the quality of provision in the early years is considerably improved. Parents commented positively about the induction processes you have introduced. Inspection evidence demonstrates their confidence is well founded. Your early years team has reorganised the learning environment which is now welcoming and stimulating. Children achieve well and those currently in the school are making strong progress from their starting points.
- Leaders correctly identified the need to improve children's writing and they are supported with practical opportunities to write.
- Staff know the children well and frequently and accurately assess what they are able to do. Adults use this information to ensure that they plan activities that enable children, including the most able, to make rapid gains in their basic skills. Children are happy and safe in their learning. You have received effective support from the local authority in bringing about these impressive changes.
- To establish if the school continued to provide a good quality of education, my final line of enquiry explored how successfully pupils achieve across the curriculum. You have created a rich and varied curriculum. Pupils are inspired to learn and enjoy doing so. One pupil reported that, 'It's not like learning – it's fun!'
- Through your chosen themed approach, pupils are enabled to use their literacy and numeracy skills across the wider curriculum. However, curricular links are more established in reading and writing than in mathematics. The displays of pupils' work around the school and the work in their books indicate that pupils have opportunities to learn across a range of subjects.
- During the inspection, the Year 1 pupils were enthusiastically and accurately counting in German. Year 5 pupils developed their research skills on the internet, demonstrating a

knowledge of e-safety, combined with their learning about history and geography topics.

- Some teachers in key stage 2 are not as effective as others in ensuring that English and mathematics skills are developed through learning in other subjects. This means that school policy is not consistently applied. While teaching over time appears strong, greater consistency is required. You know that tracking and analysis of individual pupils' progress across the wider curriculum lacks the precision of that in English and mathematics and you are working on this so that progress can be clearly measured.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment systems in all subjects are as effective as those in English and mathematics
- all key stage 2 staff consistently develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills through your chosen thematic approach to learning
- parents are communicated with better so that they all know about the effective work that takes place in the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Westminster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paula Masters
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's own evaluation of its performance, plans for future development and achievement of your current pupils. Meetings were held with you, your senior leadership team and your governors, including the chair of governors. I met with seven members of your staff and a representative of the local authority. I looked at evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. I visited all your classes with you and members of your senior staff. I looked at samples of pupils' work. I spoke with eight pupils about their learning and well-being. I also spoke with pupils informally during lessons, around school and on the field.

I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including mandatory checks made for the safe recruitment of staff. I looked at logs of pupils' behaviour. I held discussions with you, your deputy headteacher and other staff about safeguarding and attendance. The views of 49 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. I also took account of the views of 26 staff who completed

their online survey during the inspection.