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Miss Clare Campbell
Headteacher
St Joan of Arc RC Primary School
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Dear Miss Campbell

Short inspection of St Joan of Arc RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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 July 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 have built a strong and effective team of senior leaders. Accurate evaluation of the school's performance enables you to focus sharply on where improvements are needed. You carefully plan action and rigorously check its impact. The aim always is to improve the pupils' learning.

You have appointed a strong team of 'cohort' leaders with a key responsibility for the progress of all pupils in their year groups. They have become expert at checking performance, providing support for their teams and evaluating where pupils need additional help and support. Your team effectively uses advice, challenge and guidance from outside sources such as the local authority and expert consultants to support school improvement. The challenge provided by the governing body ensures that you and your staff stay focused on doing the very best for all pupils.

Leaders have maintained and built upon the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Outcomes for pupils have remained strong and any dips tackled quickly so they can be eliminated. The progress of pupils remains at least good across subjects and is strongest in reading. Attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils are prepared well for secondary school.

You and your staff team ensure that the school is very calm and orderly. Pupils told me that the excellent behaviour seen during my visit is typical of their daily experiences. Parents who responded to the questionnaire and to the school's own survey said that the school manages the behaviour of pupils well. Pupils were

observed moving sensibly around the school and playing happily on the playground. Those spoken with showed great pride in the posts of responsibility they undertake. Your staff team helps pupils to meet your mission statement and particularly to respect each other.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and learning. They take great care to present their work neatly. They are very keen to be successful. Their attendance is consistently well above average and very few are regularly absent. During the inspection, pupils were seen to concentrate on their work, readily share ideas in discussion and answer their teachers' questions thoughtfully. They were very polite towards each other and adults. They were seen to respond instantaneously to their teachers.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. You have built a strong safeguarding culture where policies are continually reviewed and training is an important priority. You check staff understanding by regularly presenting scenarios for discussion on how to be alert to the signs of any potential concern. The dangers associated with gangs are kept continually under review. A visitor has addressed Year 5 and 6 pupils about the experience of losing her son to stabbing in a high-profile case. Robust procedures mean your staff very rigorously check the whereabouts of pupils when they leave the school. This includes when a family returns to their country of origin.

Parents are strongly of the view that their children are well cared for and kept safe by the school. Pupils agree they feel safe in school. They report how carefully staff help them to spot risks and stay safe. You place a strong emphasis on e-safety, which pupils revisit each term. This includes specific guidance about online bullying, following which Year 6 pupils led an assembly. Pupil 'digital leaders' act as e-safety ambassadors, and lead the annual 'e-safety week'. They prepared and distributed leaflets to parents, following a survey of pupils' online use at home. The outcomes were an eye-opener for many parents. They have led sessions on online safety at the local football stadium for other schools, and participated in conferences organised by a large national corporation. Other regular training for pupils includes cycling proficiency and staying safe on the railways.

Inspection findings

- We identified three areas for investigation during my visit. The first of these was to explore the reasons why progress in reading has been so strong for the last two years, and attainment is much higher than the national average by the end of key stage 2. We also agreed to look at the impact of changes you have introduced at key stage 2, including teaching skills such as comprehension, inference and deduction.
- There are several key drivers in the school's approach to promote reading. These start in the Nursery, with an emphasis on developing and understanding vocabulary. Your teachers build on this throughout the school. Pupils enjoy the

'buddy system', where older pupils read to younger children and listen to them read. A major contributor to success is strong parental support for their children's reading at home, based on clear expectations and guidance from school. Teachers quickly identify any pupil not getting this support, for whatever reason. They then read to an adult in school. Teachers read each day to their classes and use high-quality texts in their lessons. Pupils have regular library sessions, supported by a professional librarian. You have also focused more sharply through a new approach to developing pupils' deeper understanding of skills such as inference, comprehension and deduction.

- These actions have promoted very strong progress in reading and good outcomes in phonics. Pupils develop a love of reading, as a result of the quality of books they study. The new approach enables pupils to analyse a short piece of text, so the teacher can draw out key skills. These sessions also broaden pupils' vocabulary. Pupils also gain an understanding of how to interrogate what they are reading to infer meaning. Pupils learn to refer to the text to justify their answers, which are often quite perceptive.
- The second area we chose to explore was how effectively leaders have introduced changes to the teaching of mathematics. We identified this as it has been a key priority in your improvement plan over the last year. We wanted to see how securely teachers had embraced new teaching approaches and the impact of these approaches on pupils' progress and understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Leaders have managed the change to the new framework for teaching effectively, supported by external advice and guidance. Teachers report that their confidence and expertise have grown through training and support. Some teachers are not fully secure in the new teaching methodology. You have, therefore, planned to extend training for identified teachers, alongside induction for new teachers joining the school in September.
- Key number skills are promoted through a daily session at the start of each lesson. These sessions focus on particular concepts for a half-term, and enable teachers to 'drill down' so the skill is fully understood. Teachers identify where a pupil needs either greater challenge, further opportunities to consolidate their understanding or time to secure a new concept. Same-day interventions are effective and make good use of the enhanced skills of teaching assistants. As a result, pupils' fluency and accuracy when calculating have been greatly enhanced. Pupils have developed their reasoning skills considerably this year. They know they will be expected to explain their thinking at every stage, and often share this with others.
- The third line of enquiry we followed was to consider the impact of your actions to improve progress in writing. This was because progress in writing at key stage 2 fell in 2017, particularly for pupils of middle prior attainment. The proportion of pupils that attained the expected standard at Year 6 was below average. You have identified this as a key priority in the school's learning improvement plan.
- Your senior team and subject leaders have taken much action to tackle this priority. This starts in the Nursery through 'write dance', and continues into Reception, where opportunities to develop writing are plentiful. Leaders have

introduced greater expectations that pupils across the school take responsibility for drafting and editing their work. Pupils model their writing on the challenging texts they read, and the examples teachers provide. Pupils at key stage 2 now build up a piece of writing over time, as a prelude to their final version. This is slightly different from key stage 1, where much more 'pupil talk' is used to support writing. You intend to merge these two methods next year and are aware this will have to be managed carefully to retain the best features of both systems.

- Progress in writing has improved and attainment has risen. Writing outcomes have been moderated and agreed for 2018. They show considerable improvements, particularly in Year 6. Virtually all pupils of middle prior attainment have reached at least the expected standard. Several are assessed as working at greater depth.
- Handwriting is a strength. Forming letters in a joined style starts for some in Reception. Pupils carefully follow guidance provided by their teachers when trying to improve their work. Their writing is imaginative, and captures the reader's attention. They use interesting vocabulary, often write at length and use ambitious grammatical structures. Pupils successfully apply features they see in the texts they read, and model the author's style to add quality to their writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers are confident to teach the new mathematics programme so that pupils' outcomes rise further
- careful thought is given to merging programmes for teaching writing at key stage 2, and that the impact is rigorously evaluated.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met you, your senior team, the English and mathematics leaders and the cohort leaders. I met three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority and held a telephone conversation with your school improvement adviser.

You and subject leaders accompanied me when I visited parts of lessons. I also

observed pupils as they moved around the school.

I met with a group of pupils to discuss their experiences of school.

I took account of the 125 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also took account of the 42 responses to the pupil questionnaire. You provided an analysis of surveys undertaken with parents, staff and pupils earlier this year.

I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, and records of training and safeguarding checks.