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Mr Diarmuid Skehan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Skehan

Short inspection of St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment a little over a year ago, you have worked hard with leaders and governors to build on the school's positive and trusting culture. The school has a strong Christian ethos and maintains a welcoming and harmonious atmosphere. You communicate your vision of high academic standards and good behaviour clearly to all. Many parents spoke about the 'family feel' that exists across the school. They are pleased that pupils' social development and well-being have a high priority. Pupils demonstrate exceptionally caring attitudes. They collaborate well and are respectful to staff and each other. For example, they help to improve the experience of other pupils within the school through a 'friendship committee'. They also have a highly developed social conscience, which is evident through the pupil-led fundraising initiatives for good causes. British values feature strongly in the school; for example, pupils are given opportunities to exercise their vote on a range of issues.

Leaders and governors share a focus on school improvement and reflect carefully on the impact of their work. Governors provide challenge to leaders through regular meetings and visits to the school. You have a good awareness of the school's strengths and have well-developed plans to help address the weaknesses you have identified. Your accurate and insightful lesson observations provide teachers with useful advice and feedback as to how they can improve specific aspects of their teaching. For example, you have encouraged teachers to reflect on how their classrooms develop pupils' resilience and independence. An outcome of this was seen in the very effective use of 'working walls', which pupils frequently used to

help them with their thinking when they got stuck, or needed additional ideas or support.

Pupils make good progress and their attainment is, overall, above average by the end of Year 6. In 2017 an above-average proportion of pupils attained the expected and high standard in reading and mathematics. However, this strong progress is not consistently evident throughout the school. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. A robust approach and an understanding that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility have ensured that all staff are trained in identifying possible signs of risk and harm. Secure systems are in place for recruiting and vetting new staff. Senior leaders work appropriately with external agencies to ensure that concerns are quickly followed up.

Pupils take great pride in looking after each other. One pupil who joined the school during the middle of the year told me she felt like she 'had always belonged here because everyone is so welcoming and kind'. Pupils are aware that there are risks to their safety in the local area. They told me that the road outside of the school can get very busy and sometimes people do not park with consideration, which makes it difficult to cross the road safely. You are aware of this and work with local stakeholders, where possible, to minimise this risk to pupils. Pupils are well prepared for the risks they may be exposed to in the wider society through the school's work on e-safety training and 'stranger awareness'.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection I met with you to discuss leaders' key priorities. You had accurately identified the need to improve the progress of the small group of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium grant. Historical data showed this group had not made as much progress as other pupils nationally. We therefore agreed to evaluate the effectiveness of provision for this group and its impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The school had not fully evaluated the impact of last year's pupil premium spending and the required information had not been published on the school's website. Recently, however, steps were taken to remedy these deficiencies. A member of staff has been appointed as the 'pupil premium champion' who will meet regularly with eligible pupils to check progress, discuss targets and help ensure that they are engaged and motivated. There are plans in place to allocate funding across the school to help remove barriers to learning and improve outcomes for this group of pupils in all year groups. It is also planned that a governor will monitor the school's work.
- Leaders know individuals and their family circumstances well and have built positive relationships. The barriers to learning that you have identified include emotional well-being, social and emotional development and lack of confidence in

speech and language. Plans are in place to train more teaching assistants, to give them greater expertise in these areas.

- The school's own tracking systems indicate that, although there is still some work to be done, disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving. Leaders meet termly with teachers to hold them to account for pupils' progress. Interventions are put in place and are monitored for impact. When leaders track pupils more frequently, for example in Years 2 and 6, progress is accelerated. In these year groups interventions are quickly adapted to ensure that short-term targets are met. Leaders plan to ensure that all pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding will be tracked half-termly in the future.
- Secondly, I focused on pupils' writing. This was because Year 6 pupils' progress in writing in 2017 and 2018 was below that in reading and mathematics. We considered the effectiveness and sustainability of the school's work to improve pupils' writing.
- You explained that writing has been a whole-school focus from the early years upwards. Work in books across the school shows that pupils take pride in their work. Handwriting is very neat and pupils are developing vocabulary and punctuation at an age-appropriate standard. The outcomes of good teaching were seen in pupils' work and books in some classes. This is particularly effective in classes where teachers make sure that pupils know how to improve their work. This strong practice is not yet consistent across the school.
- Strong teaching included effective modelling of the skills needed to be a good writer. Consideration was given to a range of types of writing and the importance of audience. Some very effective teaching questioned pupils to think really hard about their writing, requiring them to justify, explain and expand their ideas. Good examples were also seen of teachers adapting lessons to match the attainment of the pupils. For example, lower-attaining pupils benefited from the use of writing frames to help them structure their ideas before writing. However, inconsistencies remain where teaching is less successful in developing skills and motivating pupils to write interestingly and in detail.
- Finally we considered the quality of the wider curriculum. This was because there was little information on the school website. The school works hard to develop creative ways to ensure that key skills of reading, writing and mathematics are developed while maintaining a broad curriculum throughout the school. This gives pupils the opportunity to learn in a range of subjects, which they enjoy.
- The curriculum is very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An example of this was the mature and sensible way year 6 pupils participated in a workshop about refugees. They shared thoughts and ideas, showing empathy for the challenges faced by children and adults who are forced to leave their homeland.
- Teachers plan a relevant curriculum so that pupils have the chance to explore challenging world issues with pupils. Leaders are keen that the curriculum enables pupils to develop an awareness of other cultures and religious beliefs. For example, pupils in a range of classes were able to share what they had learned from a visit to synagogue on the day of the inspection. Effective cross-

curricular links enable pupils to work in depth. For example, Year 6 pupils produced good quality displays about China, showing that they had developed skills and knowledge in history, geography, cultural awareness and art.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the impact of the school's work to raise the performance of disadvantaged pupils, is carefully monitored, making effective use of assessment data to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- all teachers have the same high expectations through the sharing of the good practice that already exists across the school, particularly in the teaching of writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you, senior leaders, a range of representatives from the governing body who are also trustees of the academy trust, a local authority representative and a representative of the diocese. I visited classrooms to observe learning and looked at samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and other curriculum subjects. I also talked to children in Reception and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 about their learning, both at formal and informal times throughout the day. I read responses staff made to Ofsted's staff survey and held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day. Responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were taken into account, including written comments. I looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information on pupils' attendance and documentation related to safeguarding, as well as assessment and behaviour information.