

20 November 2018

Mrs Florence Collins
Headteacher
St Mary's Priory Roman Catholic Infant School
Hermitage Road
Tottenham
London
N15 5RE

Dear Mrs Collins

Short inspection of St Mary's Priory Roman Catholic Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 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 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. You have built a strong and effective team of senior leaders. You are committed to providing an inclusive and caring learning environment for pupils. Your work is valued and respected by the school community, whose members share your vision for the school's continued success.

The school's strong ethos, based on Christian values, fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave very well and relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. You have high expectations and aspirations for everyone involved with St Mary's Priory, as summed up by the school's motto, 'Where great lives begin'.

Parents, carers, staff and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents told me that you and your staff know every child really well and are always approachable if they have any concerns. The school gives priority to helping parents to learn how to support their own children with their learning. The school also provides training courses for parents to develop their employment and work-based skills.

All of the identified areas for improvement in the previous inspection report have been successfully addressed. The most able pupils are being well challenged in lessons. Accurate assessment of pupils' progress ensures that school improvement is focused where it is most needed. Governors are well informed about the curriculum and make regular school visits to support and challenge leaders.

Outcomes for pupils have remained strong, with attainment that is above average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents strong progress, particularly in writing. However, in recent years, a below-average proportion of pupils have reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. New strategies have been effective in raising standards this year and further work is planned in this area.

Leaders are also working to develop the new 'enhanced curriculum', intended to give pupils the chance to develop their own interests in areas such as history, geography and the creative arts. Currently, however, this is at an early stage of development and the curriculum does not yet have overall coherence, nor ensures continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are of a high quality. You and your safeguarding team ensure that thorough checks are made on all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. The single central record is detailed and is checked regularly by the governing body.

Training for staff is regular and kept up to date. Leaders were able to tell me in detail about the specific safeguarding concerns in the local area. The safeguarding team knows individual pupils and families well. Your team works effectively with external agencies to ensure that, when needed, families have swift access to appropriate support services.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They said that they know whom to go to with any worries or concerns, and they feel well cared for. They learn about online safety through workshops and in the school's curriculum. Parents spoken to agree that their children are safe, highlighting the pastoral care the school provides.

Inspection findings

- Several key areas were evaluated to confirm that the school remains good. The first of these was in relation to leaders' work to raise standards in early years. Outcomes for early years children are at the expected standard by the end of Reception Year.
- Children enter both the Nursery and the Reception Year with skills that are broadly below those typical for their age. Effective leadership ensures that children in early years benefit from a good start to their education. The well-resourced provision, both indoors and outdoors, offers children a richly stimulating learning environment. Teachers and other adults plan a range of exciting learning activities. Members of staff pay considerable care and attention to children's welfare. As a result, children make strong progress in their learning, particularly in their social development. Further work is needed to develop their communication and language skills so that a higher proportion attain a good level of development by the time they leave Reception.

- Next, we looked at phonics outcomes. This was because the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been either at or below average for three of the last four years.
- New leadership of phonics has brought several changes to the provision. Training has been provided for all staff and learning resources have been carefully supplemented. Phonics is now taught twice daily as part of a systematic and structured approach. Interventions are carefully targeted, based on secure assessments of pupils' abilities. The school provides workshops for parents and also a phonics lending library so that parents can support their own children's learning.
- However, our observation of phonics teaching, including of support staff teaching small groups of pupils, showed continuing areas for development. We saw some instances where pupils were not able to match the sounds to letters and apply these to their own writing. On these occasions, the activities provided were not precise enough; additionally, noise levels sometimes made it hard for some pupils to hear the sounds properly. Therefore, although provisional outcomes for phonics rose significantly in 2018, there is still work to be done to secure consistently good teaching.
- The third line of enquiry was the wider curriculum, focusing particularly on the humanities, science and art across key stage 1 as part of your new enhanced curriculum.
- Classroom observation and scrutiny of pupils' enhanced curriculum topic books show that they have learned about a range of interesting topics in history. In Year 1, pupils were making booklets and writing about Guy Fawkes and bonfire night. In Year 2, pupils choose some topics for themselves, including 'Famous British Women' and 'The Wright Brothers'. Pupils also wrote about Black History Month; they eagerly told me about the links they had made in their topic work to the country and people of Ghana.
- Humanities subjects contribute well to other aspects of learning. Pupils are applying their early writing skills well in history and geography. Books are well maintained and pupils take pride in their presentation. Religious education strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their understanding of other faiths.
- However, aspects of humanities subjects, particularly geography, remain underdeveloped. The enhanced curriculum is not yet fully coherent and assessment of pupils' progress is at an early stage.
- The final key line of enquiry concerned pupils' attendance. In recent years, pupils' rates of absence and persistent absence were above average.
- The attendance team has improved attendance so that it is now near the national average. A number of successful initiatives have been implemented, including a mixture of rewards and sanctions. However, persistent absenteeism still remains high and is a priority for leaders and governors.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies for teaching phonics are consistently applied, so that more pupils meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- the school's own key priority to provide an enhanced curriculum for all its pupils is taken forward with a coherent programme supported by the assessment of pupils' progress.

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 Haringey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sean Flood
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held discussions with you and other senior and middle leaders. I spoke with a representative from the local authority and held a meeting with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with pupils in class, in structured settings and informally. I also spoke to parents. I observed pupils' behaviour in class, in the playgrounds and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised pupils' work in a wide range of subjects. I heard readers across the school and spoke with pupils about the books they are reading. I also visited the Nursery provision. I made visits to all classes alongside senior leaders. I examined the school's assessment information. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation related to safeguarding, welfare and attendance. I looked at behaviour and bullying incident logs. I considered the responses of 11 parents to Parent View, and the responses of staff to Ofsted's online surveys.