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Mr Martin Macaulay
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Macaulay

Short inspection of St Augustine's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. As headteacher, you successfully lead from the front. Staff and pupils look up to you and appreciate the strong leadership that you provide. Leadership at all levels is improving at a rapid pace. Staff training is wide and varied. Senior and subject leaders benefit from the personalised leadership opportunities available to them. Staff morale is very high. You have skilfully managed to create a team ethos that brings out the best in your staff. Every member of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire said that they were proud to be a member of staff at St. Augustine's School.

Governance is strong. Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and committed to their role. They know that the role of a governor involves much more than simply attending meetings or visiting the school. Governors hold you and all staff to account. Minutes from the meetings of the governing body demonstrate that governors conduct regular audits to identify skill and knowledge gaps. This informs governors' future recruitment strategies and training needs.

Pupils' personal development is superb. Staff encourage pupils to take part in a multitude of extra-curricular activities. Often, the pupils will lead clubs or after-school events, such as the politics club. Staff lead the rainbow club, supporting pupils who may have suffered a bereavement or loss. A caring ethos permeates every aspect of school life. Pupils say that in this school they 'really have a voice'. Pupils appreciate that staff take time to listen and act on their ideas or concerns. Furthermore, you have recently introduced activities and support sessions for pupils

so that they can discuss their emotions. One pupil spoke for others when saying: 'The teachers are like our best friends. We can always speak to them if we are worried about something.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are vigilant. They ensure that the safety and welfare of pupils is of paramount importance. Scrutiny of case files and documentation demonstrates that staff assiduously record all concerns, implementing swift and appropriate interventions to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm. Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with children. Staff with safeguarding responsibilities are appropriately trained and have a thorough understanding of their roles. Leaders ensure that all staff undertake regular training to enable them to minimise the risks pupils may face. Procedures for checking a pupils' location and welfare when absent from school are effective. Leaders have ensured that the school's records include at least two emergency contact telephone numbers for each pupil. Furthermore, when a pupil is absent, staff contact parents and carers swiftly to check that a pupil is adequately cared for.

Leaders have amended the curriculum to ensure that pupils are taught how to stay safe. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that there are no parts of the school's site they class as 'no-go areas'. Pupils appreciate the regular fire drills, lessons on e-safety and the large number of anti-bullying ambassadors in the school. Pupils can confidently describe the dangers of talking to a stranger.

Inspection findings

- Teachers' astute and innovative planning ensures that they meet the learning needs of pupils from their different starting points. Teachers bring lessons to life. Pupils say that their lessons are fun but challenging. Typically, lessons involve numerous opportunities for pupils to work independently or in groups. When pupils work collaboratively, they listen attentively to their peers and happily accept advice or guidance from staff and friends. Across the school, leaders encourage teachers to take risks; you told me that you did not want teachers to 'play it safe'. Accordingly, teachers use the indoor and outdoor spaces successfully to stimulate curiosity or deepen pupils' understanding. For example, in Reception, children arrived at school to find that Santa's sleigh had crashed in the playground. With minimal staff input, children excitedly rearranged the sleigh (milk crates) using the hidden numbers. When finished, and because of the probing questions asked by staff, children were able to count to 10 as well as explain the benefits of working as a team.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work demonstrates that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. Teachers and classroom support staff know their pupils well. They have a detailed understanding of the additional needs of each pupil with SEND. Interventions in and out of class occur regularly. One-to-one support and small group activities enable pupils with SEND

to learn in different ways that suit them.

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is good across the school. In the early years, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception is regularly above the national average. Similarly, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who pass the phonics screening check is above average. From above average starting points, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 continues to be above that achieved by their peers nationally. Between 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics across key stage 2 was in line with that achieved by other pupils nationally, representing average progress.
- The carefully crafted curriculum contributes to improving standards of writing across the school. This, and the recent emphasis on the development of a rich vocabulary, ensures that pupils are confident when writing at length. Most pupils in key stage 2 frequently use a range of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation to improve their writing. In mathematics, teachers' strong subject knowledge ensures that pupils explore most mathematical concepts in a range of different contexts and/or everyday situations. Pupils' problem-solving and reasoning are a significant strength. In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils' progress is not as strong. In these lessons, pupils are sometimes asked to complete activities that do not match the curriculum aims for each subject. When this occurs, pupils miss opportunities to develop their skills or improve their approach to enquiry.
- Rates of attendance are above average. You have been successful in raising the profile of attendance recently. Pupils and most families understand the benefits of excellent attendance. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is very small. You communicate your expectations to parents regularly. This has contributed to improving rates of attendance in this academic year following a slight dip last year. Despite your high expectations, some families continue to take unauthorised holidays during term time.
- The teaching of early reading skills is a priority in school. Pupils read every day. Teachers encourage parents and carers to read with their children regularly. Recently, at a stay and play morning, parents came to school in their pyjamas to help nurture a love of bedtime reading. Additionally, parents say that they are kept well informed about reading strategies and the progress their child should make in their reading. Notwithstanding this, some pupils' reading books are too advanced for their current level of reading. Staff sometimes move pupils on to a new reading book before they have mastered the phonic knowledge and skills to be able to successfully decode the words in the book. Furthermore, the books that pupils read in the early stage of reading are not always phonically decodable and do not match the phonics knowledge they have acquired. This means that pupils look for and apply alternative strategies to work out the words they are reading rather than applying their phonic knowledge.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make consistently good and better progress in reading, writing and mathematics across key stage 2 in order to reach even higher standards by the end of Year 6
- review teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics so that the activities pupils complete match the intended curriculum aims for each subject
- confirm that the books pupils read in the early stages of reading are closely matched to their phonic knowledge.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer, the director of education for the Diocese of Middlesbrough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Middlesbrough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and three representatives from the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust, including the chief executive officer. I accompanied senior leaders during observations in classrooms and together we reviewed and evaluated pupils' written work. I listened to a group of pupils read and spoke to governors, teachers, pupils and parents. I analysed the school's website and evaluated a wide range of additional documentation. This included the record of suitability checks on staff, safeguarding policies and associated files, in addition to attendance and behaviour logs. I reviewed assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress, as well as leaders' action plans and evaluations. I took into account the 40 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Seventeen members of staff completed Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. One hundred and four pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. All these responses were taken into consideration.