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Mrs Sharon McKeown
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Dear Mrs McKeown

Short inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 16 April 2019, 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Both you and your deputy took up your posts in September 2018. Since then, you have worked well with the local authority and the diocese to further strengthen the school's effectiveness.

You and your predecessor have focused considerable attention on ensuring that pupils' work reflects a suitable level of challenge. This was identified as a priority during the last inspection. Professional development for staff has been particularly successful in securing this aim in relation to writing. The checks you make on the quality of teaching have recently become more thorough. This is supporting teaching staff to refine their practice further. You recognise that there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils receive appropriately challenging work in all subjects.

A number of senior and middle leaders are at an early stage of their development. You have prioritised their growth through providing training for them. Some of these leaders now play a crucial role in securing improvements to the quality of teaching. You have plans in place to ensure that all senior and middle leaders are equally effective in their roles.

You have been particularly successful in maintaining an inclusive, welcoming ethos in the school, which is underpinned by Christian values. Staff, governors and pupils reflect your passion for celebrating the individuality and talents of each child. Pupils have opportunities to perform together regularly. During the inspection, all key

stage 2 pupils rehearsed their liturgy service for parents. They sang together beautifully. This illustrated well the harmony that exists within the school's culturally diverse community.

You, rightly, place considerable importance on pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils hold a range of leadership roles, such as class ambassadors and church readers. They are involved in regular fundraising, as well as a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as gardening in the school's allotment. Consequently, they are incredibly polite, mature and appreciative. The curriculum provides pupils with a well-rounded view of the world and of pertinent issues. For example, key stage 2 pupils recently held an 'environmental summit' to share their learning on this subject with their parents and carers.

You have ensured that governors now receive detailed information, including about pupils' outcomes and their attendance. Governors have welcomed presentations from senior and middle leaders, which have equipped them with increased knowledge of school's priorities and performance. Governors are beginning to challenge leaders about pupils' outcomes. However, they do not hold leaders to account stringently for all aspects of school's performance.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that a culture of safeguarding exists in the school. Staff are knowledgeable about the risks pupils may face and the indicators of such harm. Staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding liaise with external agencies where necessary. Pupils who shared their views during the inspection said that they feel safe in the school. They also said that they trust members of staff to support them with any worries which may arise.

Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As such, pupils are conscientious and the atmosphere in the school is calm. Instances of bullying are rare. Pupils know how to stay safe in a range of contexts, including online.

Pupils' rates of attendance are good and no group is disadvantaged by low attendance. Despite this, you are not complacent. Leaders constantly strive to improve attendance, particularly for the small number of pupils with low attendance rates. Initiatives such as breakfast club and nurture groups have been effective in reducing absences and lateness for these pupils.

Inspection findings

- At the previous inspection, you and your predecessor were asked to improve the teaching of mathematics. Since then, you, along with other leaders, have introduced and embedded a new approach to teaching this subject. As such, in most classes, teachers strike an effective balance between securing pupils' basic skills and giving them opportunities for reasoning and problem-solving. Following professional development, teachers and teaching assistants have suitable subject knowledge. They use this well to provide clear explanations and to question

pupils to move their learning on.

- This new approach improved pupils' outcomes in 2018. Pupils' attainment at the end of each key stage was above average. In comparison to 2017, pupils in Year 6 made stronger progress, although this remained average.
- Pupils have opportunities to develop their mathematical understanding in relation to their learning in other subjects. This is effective in extending pupils' learning and making it meaningful to them. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 developed their understanding of two-dimensional shapes through work on Islamic patterns. This was linked to their learning about the ancient civilisation of Baghdad in history and the Muslim faith in religious education (RE).
- Along with other leaders, you have provided training for teaching staff which has focused on how to make mathematics activities suitably challenging for pupils. This has been effective in a number of year groups, where pupils now relish the complex puzzles and problems teachers pose for them. However, in some year groups, too often, pupils, particularly the most able pupils, complete work which is too easy. Consequently, pupils' progress is not maximised.
- In many classes, pupils are skilled in working cooperatively with their peers to consolidate and extend their understanding in mathematics. Additionally, you have recently introduced strategies to develop pupils' resilience in approaching challenges. However, this is at an early stage of implementation. As a result, some pupils are not expected to persevere and, instead, choose to miss out the questions they find difficult.
- Upon taking up post, you, rightly, identified that the leadership of disadvantaged pupils needed strengthening. Published outcomes in 2018 for each key stage show that disadvantaged pupils' attainment lagged behind that of other pupils nationally. The deputy headteacher has since led considerable improvements in this area. Working with staff, she has identified accurately individual pupils' barriers to learning. She has then tailored support to meet pupils' social, emotional and academic needs. She checks on the difference this makes to pupils' outcomes regularly. She is able to demonstrate that additional teaching is resulting in stronger progress for pupils. Similarly, by allocating places at breakfast club, attendance rates for this group are now above average.
- The leadership for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also shows marked improvement this year. The special educational needs coordinator has worked with external experts to ensure that pupils' needs are now identified accurately. Her work with specialist agencies and parents has ensured that teaching staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' needs. As a result, teaching is adapted well to ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- senior and middle leaders receive further professional development so that they

carry out thorough monitoring and take full responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in the areas they lead

- all pupils, including the most able, are given work in all subjects, including mathematics, which is suitably challenging and which develops their ability to persevere
- governors hold leaders to account consistently and effectively in relation to school improvement priorities, including pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Karine Hendley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, a local authority representative and the director of education for the diocese of Hallam. I also met with staff and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I observed teaching and learning with you in classes across the school. I scrutinised pupils' work alongside middle leaders. I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, and observed their behaviour around the school, including at breakfast club and playtime. I reviewed school documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, as well as information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance.

I took account of the eight responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I met with parents at the start of the day and took account of the 47 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 23 free-text responses. I spoke with staff during the inspection and considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.