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Mrs Joanne Burford  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Burford

### **Short inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 July 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, your staff and governors have a clear vision for the school that promotes the achievement of every pupil within a caring community, based on Christian values. This strong sense of community permeates the school, providing care and support for pupils, their families and staff. Together with senior leaders and governors, you are leading a determined and effective drive to ensure continuous and sustained improvement in the school. You and your leadership team have a clear view of the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be tackled to bring about further improvements. You all share a clear vision to enable pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes and to become mature and caring individuals.

Pupils learn in a happy, calm, orderly environment. During our visits to classrooms, the ethos was purposeful, with pupils working diligently and cooperating well. Pupils told me how much they enjoy school. The vast majority of responses to Ofsted's online parent, pupil and staff questionnaires are positive. Virtually all parents would recommend the school, and they appreciate the teaching and support that their children receive. One parent spoke for many when she said, 'There is a supportive and caring ethos, with a dedicated team giving our children the best education.' Many parents commented on the approachability of staff and leaders, as well as the range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides.

A very small number of parents expressed concerns about the way that the school responded to pupils' behaviour. However, in discussion with pupils and parents alike, everyone agreed that the school was very effective at dealing with poor behaviour when it arose. Parents and pupils felt that you and your staff were vigilant, and resolved any incidents of concern very well.

You have maintained the strengths identified at the last inspection. Pupils feel safe and happy and the school imparts its moral and spiritual values very well. The school was asked to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, including in reading and also in the early years. A focus on pupils' phonic development as well as reading has resulted in improving rates of progress in these areas. Ensuring children get off to a strong start in the early years has led to teachers planning activities to help children to acquire basic skills and become independent, enthusiastic learners. This has been successful. Learning activities engage children's interest, spark their curiosity and challenge them to achieve well across all areas of learning. Staff are on the lookout for opportunities to help children practice and deepen their understanding of reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders were also asked to strengthen school improvement planning. The school's plans for the future are now precise and measurable. They support your focus on improving pupils' progress.

Pupils play an active role by taking positions of responsibility, for example by being a member of the eco-committee, digital leaders or a class representative on the school council. These roles contribute towards the school's vibrant and nurturing community. Most pupils attend at least one of the many after-school clubs. These clubs provide the opportunity to participate in sport, be creative and look after the school's garden. A close relationship with a school in Hong Kong helps pupils to develop their awareness of ways of living beyond their own community. By the time pupils leave the school, they can reflect deeply and express themselves confidently. You have a clear understanding of the school's many strengths. You rightly identified that pupils' experiences in some subjects needed to improve. As a result, you have strengthened the links across the curriculum to enhance and develop reading, writing and mathematics skills and knowledge.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and thorough. Staff and governors undertake annual safeguarding training. Staff have a clear understanding of the processes and procedures for reporting concerns. Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and understand their role in keeping pupils safe. A nominated governor regularly checks the school's systems for vetting and recruiting staff.

Pupils know that if they are concerned or worried about anything, they are always able to tell an adult. They talked about the many ways in which the school teaches them to stay safe, including on their bikes and in Forest School. From the Reception upwards, pupils learn how to keep safe when using the internet.

## Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed to look at the teaching of reading, the pupils' rates of progress in subjects across the curriculum, and how well leaders have built on the strengths identified at the last inspection.
- Jointly with you, I observed learning in all classes. Teaching ensures that there is challenge for pupils at all levels and in all year groups. Pupils apply themselves diligently to the tasks set for them. Those who I spoke with were able to articulate clearly what they were learning and why. Teachers encourage older pupils to evaluate their learning. This successfully enables pupils to develop their independence and take the lead in their own learning. Additional adults effectively support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers' planning ensures that disadvantaged pupils are also well supported and appropriately challenged. As a result, these groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Since the previous inspection, senior and middle leaders have become increasingly adept at using information about pupils' learning and progress to improve the quality of teaching. In 2018, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 was above that which is typical nationally. Previously, rates of progress between Year 2 and Year 6 were average. In all year groups, pupils are making strong progress in reading and writing because you are working closely with teachers, and you are supporting them to use the information about each pupil's progress. Teachers now plan learning based on accurate assessments of pupils' prior learning. In reading, teachers typically introduce pupils to a wide range of texts, which they discuss in some depth. This results in pupils becoming fluent, enthusiastic readers. One pupil, whom I heard read, said, 'We get ideas for our stories from the books our teacher reads to us.'
- Leaders reviewed the curriculum in September 2018. The approach is planned to provide more opportunities than previously for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, such as science and geography. Recently, teachers have improved the way in which they help pupils to develop their mathematical understanding. The new approach is resulting in higher standards because pupils are increasingly able to use their good number skills to solve problems. Subject leaders are beginning to monitor their areas of responsibility to ensure that pupils have access to the full breadth of the curriculum. Initial signs are positive, and leaders rightly recognise that they need to monitor the delivery and impact of the curriculum carefully to ensure that the planned skills and knowledge develop and deepen over time.
- Leadership was a strength at the last inspection. Following a period of change in leadership, the roles and responsibilities within the wider leadership team were reviewed in 2018 and are sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. This team is now gaining the necessary skills to support your drive and commitment to ensuring that the school continues to improve. You are keen to develop the skills of these leaders further by identifying training that will enable them to assume greater responsibility and work more independently. Leadership and management are further strengthened by governors who know the school well and provide good

levels of support and challenge.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the wider curriculum is further strengthened so that pupils' knowledge and skills are developed and deepened across a wide range of subjects.
- they continue to develop the leadership skills of new subject leaders so that they can fulfil their responsibilities with confidence and greater independence.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Lakey  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met regularly throughout the day with you, along with the deputy headteacher, to discuss a range of topics. These included outcomes for pupils, the curriculum and safeguarding. We also met early on in the inspection to discuss the self-evaluation of the school. I had meetings with four middle leaders and with three members of the governing body. I also had a meeting with a representative of the local authority. Together, we visited classes in all year groups to observe teaching and learning. During these visits, we looked at pupils' work. I also looked at some pupils' work in detail to evaluate their progress and the quality of the school's curriculum. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and had a meeting with a group of six pupils. I considered 32 responses to the pupils' survey, 28 responses to the staff questionnaire and 35 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke with parents on the playground at the start of the day. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents and development plans. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and checks, and spoke with pupils and staff at various times during the school day in order to test out their understanding of safeguarding arrangements.