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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Teresa Atkinson
Headteacher
Sacred Heart RC Primary School
Broomfield Avenue
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8UL

Dear Mrs Atkinson

Short inspection of Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 May 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 arrived at the school in September 2018 and have made clear improvements since your appointment. This is the view of parents, carers and governors, and is evident from the raised expectations around teaching and pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils make good progress in different areas of the curriculum.

One particular area of strength in school is the early years provision. Children arrive at the start of Reception with levels of development which are typical for their age. During their time in Reception, children make strong progress across all learning areas. They excel in their capacity to manage their feelings and behaviours, sharing and taking turns, being confident to have a go at new activities and being considerate of the other children. Children demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. Planned activities match children's needs and interests very well. Children are encouraged to consider new interests.

Pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning across the school are very strong, and this is also an area which has significantly improved since you arrived. Parents, pupils, staff and governors all agree that the new system to reward and sanction pupils has led to much clearer boundaries and expectations which pupils understand and value. Stakeholders also feel that adults' consistent application of the system has led to its success in supporting pupils to do their best at school.

Better behaviour has led pupils to feel safe and happy at school, as they and their parents report. Pupils say that behaviour rarely disrupts learning and more serious behavioural incidents, such as bullying, including prejudicial bullying, are very rare. Pupils are also confident that staff deal with any behavioural matters quickly and effectively, meaning that they do not persist.

At the last inspection, inspectors made a number of recommendations. Firstly, they reported that more opportunities were needed for pupils to reinforce and apply their skills in mathematics across the curriculum. They also noted that pupils needed more opportunities to use investigative practices in their learning. These areas of improvement have been successfully implemented. Mathematics teaching has improved well this academic year, and pupils' attainment and progress have benefited. Pupils use their mathematics skills regularly in different subjects, including science, design and technology, art and geography. They regularly undertake outdoor learning and apply their mathematics learning to real-life situations. In science, pupils experiment and undertake investigations, using their mathematics and design skills to make their findings.

Inspectors also recommended that the school improve the level of challenge for the most able pupils. While challenge and pace have improved this year, more could still be done to ensure that the most able pupils' needs are met as closely as possible and that they are supported to move on rapidly in their learning, especially in writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders make sure that there are procedures and systems which keep pupils safe. Policies are checked and updated regularly so adults know how to keep pupils safe and well safeguarded. There is regular training for staff and governors so they know what to do if they spot a concern or if a concern is reported to them. The school keeps parents, staff and pupils informed about what to do if they have a concern. The website keeps a record of the school's policies, which are found easily, and there are posters around the site with the names and pictures of key personnel who work to safeguard pupils. There are special events held in school, for example in assembly, to keep pupils informed, for example to make sure that they know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

The school makes checks on all staff, including volunteers, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and that they have the right qualifications for the roles they have. These checks meet legal requirements. Where issues are reported, the school makes detailed records of them. The school also liaises closely with a range of external agencies to ensure that the right people are made aware of concerns and so the school can seek specialist advice when necessary.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I wanted to make sure that improvements had been made to teaching and outcomes, as pupils' attainment and progress have been

declining over the past three years. The school has undergone significant change in the past two years and your arrival in September 2018 has brought about positive change. Thanks to improved training opportunities for staff and a clarity around what you want to see in classrooms, the quality of teaching has improved and, with it, pupils' progress and attainment have also improved. However, the progress of the most able pupils is still not rapid enough and too few reach a higher standard of learning by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

- I also wanted to see how well phonics is taught. While a broadly average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, the overall average mark pupils reach has been lower than average. Again, you have been aware of the need to sharpen up systems around the teaching of phonics. Assessment of pupils' understanding and knowledge of phonics now takes place regularly and these checks are used to inform planning to ensure that any learning gaps are filled. As a result, pupils use their phonics well and accurately in reading and writing.
- Within the inspection, I wanted to see how you are working to improve attendance as it has been just below average in recent years. You and your team have worked effectively with pupils and families to ensure that everyone is aware of the importance of regular attendance at school. You have worked specifically with families where attendance is particularly low. As a result of the school's work, attendance is improving and fewer pupils are persistently absent.
- Linked to this matter, I was keen to see how well pupils behave. There have been few serious incidents leading to exclusion in recent years. However, according to behaviour records and the views of some parents, pupils, staff and governors, pupils' behaviour has declined in recent years. In addition, some parents felt their concerns were not always considered.
- However, all stakeholders agree that the standards of behaviour have improved significantly this academic year. Parents also feel their views are now listened to and acted upon. I also observed very positive attitudes to learning, as well as strong conduct, from pupils in all year groups and at different times of the day. It was also clear from books that pupils take real pride in their learning, as seen in the amount of work they do and how well they present their work. This has contributed to the improved outcomes of pupils.
- Throughout the inspection, it was important to see how well the curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests. I wanted to see how well different key skills are reinforced across the curriculum, and the breadth and balance of the curriculum offer.
- The curriculum offers pupils the chance to reinforce their key skills very well, and this contributes to the strong progress they make. Opportunities to undertake mathematics outside during science and geography lessons, for example, show pupils how to use their mathematics skills in real life and in relevant ways. There is also a board range of experiences and trips on offer which, again, engage pupils very well, bringing the different topics they study to life. Very often, these experiences provide writing opportunities.
- However, while your work to bring the curriculum to life has brought about better

provision for pupils, some middle leaders, including subject leaders, are not yet able to take initiative in developing the curriculum. They are very reliant on you and they need further development to ensure that they can work more autonomously.

- The curriculum allows pupils to enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as their understanding of British values. This is seen in the very positive relationships that different groups of pupils enjoy. There is very little bullying or discriminatory behaviour. Pupils also demonstrate empathy for people in different situations and often fundraise to raise awareness of different issues, such as poverty in the developing world. However, their understanding of the different lifestyles people have and the different life choices they make can be vague at times.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is appropriate challenge for the most able pupils, especially in writing and mathematics activities
- middle leaders feel confident in taking ownership of their area of leadership and become more autonomous in their work
- pupils have a better understanding of the different lifestyles and life choices people can make.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona McNally
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed teaching in all classes to see its effect on learning. I also looked at a wide range of pupils' work in books from several year groups, across a variety of subjects. I met with you and with other senior and middle leaders. I also held a meeting with governors and with a representative from the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese. I looked at the school's information about the safeguarding of pupils and examined behaviour and attendance records. I also checked a range of other documentation, including your self-evaluation, school development plan and assessment information. I held formal

discussions with some pupils from Years 1 to 6, and I spoke informally to several pupils during breaktime. I considered the parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and to parents' responses to the free-text questionnaire. I also spoke to several parents in the playground as they brought their children to school.