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Mr Michael Lobo
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Dear Mr Lobo

Short inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your high expectations, clear vision and sharp evaluation of strengths and weaknesses have galvanised staff and governors to work together effectively. There have been changes in the leadership team and you have appointed talented new leaders who have driven rapid and sustained improvement in school systems. For example, you have established robust methods for ensuring consistency and quality in teaching and assessment. These actions have significantly improved the achievement of current pupils. Your sharpening of accountability places the school in a strong position to further increase the pace of these improvements.

Pupils enjoy learning and their time at school. One pupil said, 'Learning is fun here.' They work with sustained concentration and good application. Pupils are keen to achieve highly. They welcome the frequent and specific guidance from teachers that they say is very helpful. Pupils act promptly and methodically on this support and, as a result, improve their work successfully.

Most parents and carers are happy with the education provided for their children. Parents say that the school provides a positive environment for their children to learn well. They are particularly positive about the support that is offered to their children. Parents told me that the school staff are approachable, friendly and communicate information clearly. One parent said: 'The school has a very warm and friendly atmosphere and my daughter loves going in every morning and comes out

happy and confident in the afternoon.'

At the last inspection, the school was asked to make better use of the information collected from assessments to improve pupils' achievement. Teachers and support staff use achievement information effectively. This ensures that learning opportunities usually stretch pupils' thinking. Leaders were also asked to help boys who were having difficulty learning to read to make faster progress. Boys now make good progress in reading. Phonics teaching for younger pupils is effective and older pupils analyse complex texts accurately with timely and good support from staff. The school was asked to raise attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance is close to the national average because leaders challenge low attendance firmly. The school supports parents to ensure that pupils come to school regularly. However, you are aware that attendance is still too low for some pupils and it remains a priority for the school.

Governors have taken decisive action to know the school and its processes well. They monitor pupils' achievement closely and follow up carefully on areas identified in the school improvement plan. Governors are developing a good level of skills to enable them to challenge with rigour. They hold specific leaders to account stringently for the impact of their actions on outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

A firm priority for the school is to increase the level of challenge in some writing tasks. Senior leaders know that there is more scope to develop pupils' writing skills in a broader range of curriculum subjects. Inspection evidence also showed that there is a need to raise attendance as it remains too low for some pupils. This means that they do not achieve as well as they could.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a positive culture for safeguarding in which pupils can talk freely and openly to staff about any problems they may face. The staff work hard and well to develop positive relationships to further promote a safe and secure environment. Staff know how to communicate and respond to any concerns that they may have about a pupil's welfare. This is because they are well trained and frequently updated on the latest guidance and individual pupils' circumstances. Leaders manage safeguarding cases proactively and liaise appropriately with parents and outside agencies. Records of action are detailed and of high quality.

Governors use their expertise in safeguarding well. They regularly check the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and that staff training is effective. Governors check that the curriculum provides many opportunities to support pupils in knowing how to keep themselves safe. Consequently, pupils talk confidently about how to stay safe, for example when they are online or crossing the road. Pupils say that they feel safe, well looked after and listened to in school. They say that bullying is rare and that they help each other to sort out more minor friendship problems. Pupils are confident that staff would deal effectively with any bullying or poor behaviour that did occur.

Inspection findings

- You have a rigorous and systematic approach to the teaching of writing that has ensured that pupils have made rapid progress, and standards of writing are good. Teachers give pupils clear direction and detailed guidance on how to create different types of writing and specific forms of grammar. Pupils develop their writing skills well through the systematic approach to editing, redrafting and assessing their work. This is enabling pupils to make good progress in the quality, quantity and accuracy of writing, spelling and handwriting in all year groups. Teachers provide rich texts to provide a strong platform for pupils to develop their ideas into well-structured pieces of writing. There are times when learning opportunities in writing are not challenging enough and writing opportunities in wider curriculum subjects are not embedded sufficiently. This slows the improvement in pupils' skills and understanding.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is strong. This is because staff provide clear explanations of how to use calculation strategies in a wide range of challenging problem-solving tasks. Staff, using assessment information well, ensure that skills are built upon carefully from previous learning. Pupils' understanding is supported effectively by well-chosen and helpful resources. Leaders are using assessment in mathematics rigorously and this helps to challenge staff to pitch questions and tasks at an appropriate level. Targets for each unit of learning in mathematics are precise. Teachers exemplify them well and pupils enjoy the achievement of meeting them.
- Disadvantaged pupils make rapid gains in their learning. Teachers have effective strategies to support pupils who are disadvantaged so that they make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff plan tasks that are typically challenging and make pupils think hard. Any gaps in pupils' learning are identified clearly. Teachers and leaders plan precise intervention activities to overcome any difficulties. Your assessment tracking system shows increased progress by this group of pupils. The proportion of pupils at the expected level of attainment for their age has increased across the school in reading, writing and mathematics and across the curriculum. More pupils supported by the pupil premium than formerly are making rapid, and sometimes exceptionally strong, progress.
- The trend of low attendance for disadvantaged pupils and boys is being stemmed. As a result, pupils' progress has improved. Attendance information for this year shows an improving picture for these two groups of pupils because leaders promote regular attendance well. You also challenge low attendance rigorously but balance this well with effective support for different family circumstances. Your analysis of attendance rates is rigorous and regular. This means that you spot patterns of absence and you quickly see any fall in a pupil's attendance and take decisive action. However, you recognise that further work is needed to ensure that the attendance of these two groups of pupils improves towards the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan learning tasks in writing that are appropriately challenging so that all pupils make strong progress
- teachers embed writing opportunities across the full range of subjects
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and boys is close to the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders, a group of pupils, 10 members of staff and five members of the governing body. I spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese. I observed teaching jointly with you, your deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher and we discussed the learning in pupils' books. I spoke with parents as they collected their children at the end of the school day.

I examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information and safeguarding records. I took account of seven responses from parents, 32 responses from staff and 80 responses from pupils to the Ofsted online questionnaires.