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15 January 2020

Miss Linda O'Callaghan  
St Mary's Catholic Infant School  
Bedford Park  
Croydon  
Surrey  
CR0 2AQ

Dear Miss O'Callaghan

### **No formal designation inspection of St Mary's Catholic Infant School**

Following my visit with Andrew Rigby, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 December 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about aspects of the quality of education.

### **Evidence**

We met with leaders, governors and staff. We spoke with pupils about their work and looked at their books. We listened to pupils from Year 2 read. We focused on reading, mathematics and art. We looked at documents related to the quality of education, for example information about the structure of the curriculum. You and other school leaders accompanied us as we visited lessons.

### **Context**

The school has been part of the St Mary's Catholic Primary Schools Trust since 2015. This is a small trust comprising this school and its junior counterpart. There are two classes in Year 1 and Year 2. The early years is made up of a 52-place Nursery and two full-time Reception classes. Over eight out of 10 pupils speak English as an additional language, many of whom join the school with little or no English. The proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans has risen sharply over the last couple of years and is now well above average.

You, your leaders and governors really understand the context of the school and its

very diverse community. Together you have designed a coherently structured curriculum that meets pupils' needs exceptionally well. You are ambitious for your pupils. Pupils rise to these high expectations. For example, your art curriculum is aspirational. Year 1 pupils were very confident in rolling pieces of paper carefully to add to their paper sculpture based on the work of Calder. They could clearly explain their work and said they like practising skills because it really helps them to improve. Both Year 1 and Year 2 pupils could talk authoritatively about the artists they have studied and the techniques they have learned to use.

You and your leaders are continually improving the quality of education on offer. For example, a recent focus on reading led to you adding story time at the end of every day for all pupils. Pupils really enjoy this: they listen intently.

Teachers have exceptional subject knowledge across the curriculum. This is because you provide a range of excellent training opportunities. Leaders have created a culture where staff are keen to learn from the most up-to-date research to develop their skills and knowledge to a high level. There is a strong sense of teamwork. Teachers are very complimentary about the support they receive. They are also complimentary about the way you and your leadership team take their well-being into account. For example, they appreciate the fact that you have reduced their workload by adopting a more efficient system for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' achievement.

This excellent practice means that the quality of education is very effective across the school. For example, staff have first-rate knowledge in how to teach phonics. Pupils learn well because teaching is precise and accurate. Pupils consequently have very well-developed phonics skills which give them a great basis for becoming confident readers. The reading curriculum meets the needs of all pupils very well. The most able readers who read with us confidently explained complex words such as 'atmosphere'. They answered questions with ease about the texts they read. Support for pupils of lower-ability and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to develop good reading skills too.

The curriculum for all subjects is very well structured. Pupils learn concepts in a logical order. This really helps their understanding. For example, in mathematics, we saw pupils working out mathematical problems with coins very successfully. They explained to us that they had learned how to add, and they had learned how much different coins represented so that was why they could do this work with ease.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum is designed so that pupils leave the school as well-rounded, independent learners who have had a broad range of experiences. Pupils visit places of interest: a farm, the seaside, and sites of cultural and historical significance. They attend events such as the opera and the ballet. They learn about a wide range of artists and contribute to society by, for example, raising money for charities. This develops their moral and cultural understanding and prepares them exceptionally well for moving on to key stage 2 and beyond.

## **External support**

In order to validate your own judgments of the school's effectiveness, you regularly invite professionals in to evaluate different aspects of your practice. Staff share their excellent skills and understanding both within school and with the other school in the trust. You are regularly asked by the diocese and the local authority to support schools needing improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the trust, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Croydon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jeanie Jovanova  
**Ofsted Inspector**