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Mrs Fiona Robertson
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Baffam Lane
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Dear Mrs Robertson

Short inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 2017, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that St Mary's continues to be a caring and inclusive school based on a strong Catholic ethos. You have a very clear understanding of what the school does well and you are taking effective steps to address what needs to be improved further.

School leaders, including governors, have been proactive in addressing school priorities as a result of pupils' achievement in 2016. Astute appointments have strengthened leadership and school leaders now work very effectively as a team. There is an unwavering desire to drive improvement and there is strong evidence to suggest this is having a positive impact.

You were rightly disappointed in the key stage 2 outcomes for mathematics in 2016. However, you and your leaders have analysed the reasons for this and have carefully adapted the mathematics curriculum to improve provision. The impact this has made over a short period of time is clearly noticeable, and, as a result, the progress pupils make has accelerated. You and your leaders recognise the significant improvements made in the teaching of mathematics and the progress pupils are making. However, you are not complacent and correctly acknowledge that further small changes are needed so that pupils' learning is maximised fully.

At the previous inspection, the school's leaders were asked to improve attainment and the quality of teaching in writing, including the writing pupils complete in other subjects. You were also asked to improve pupils' handwriting and the presentation

of their work, and to ensure pupils get the support they need from additional adults during lessons. Recent results show that these issues have been successfully addressed. Standards in writing improved markedly in 2016 and are now above national averages at key stage 2, and are similar to national averages at key stage 1. A close analysis of pupils' work in different subjects not only confirms this, but also shows that pupils present their work well, often writing in a neat handwriting style. Observations of lessons during the inspection identified the valuable support pupils receive from teaching assistants.

The recently appointed subject leader for English monitors the quality of teaching and its impact on learning rigorously. She ensures that good standards in writing are maintained and has quickly identified where further developments are needed, including improving pupils' ability to spell correctly and more consistently.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and meticulously kept, including records of the checks on adults working in the school. You ensure that staff, including those who are new to the school, receive regular and relevant training, and you keep them informed of recent legislation and updates. Staff are clear about the school's systems and what to do if they have any concerns about children's welfare. All staff are vigilant and ensure nothing is left to chance. There are good links with external agencies, such as the social services and the police, and there are clear channels for recording and following up any child protection issues.

There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to learn to keep themselves safe. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and the majority of parents who completed Parent View agree.

Inspection findings

- The leadership of the school has been strengthened and revitalised by recent appointments. The monitoring of teaching and learning is now more rigorous and clearly focused on identifying and addressing priorities. Leaders have a steadfast approach to driving improvements and the commitment to be successful.
- Teachers have received well thought-out and targeted professional development to improve the quality of provision for mathematics. They have embraced a new approach to teaching mathematics and are enthused by the revamped curriculum. Evidence in books and during lessons shows that over a relatively short period of time, pupils are completing more complex and challenging problem-solving activities and are making good progress as a result. However, more needs to be done to ensure learning activities are routinely challenging for pupils of different abilities.
- School leaders have reacted swiftly to the low outcomes for English grammar, punctuation and spelling at key stage 2. New resources have been made available for teachers, and the English curriculum has been adapted so that pupils have more opportunities to improve their skills. Evidence seen in pupils'

books demonstrates that a range of interesting grammar techniques and correct punctuation are used often. However, pupils are sometimes spelling simple words incorrectly and not applying spelling rules consistently.

- In 2016, reading outcomes at key stage 1 and key stage 2 showed a noticeable improvement, particularly the proportion of pupils achieving a higher standard. You and your leaders have quite rightly focused on improving standards in reading across the school. This has clearly had a good impact and is continuing to do so. Currently, pupils of different abilities, across the school, are making good progress as a result.
- Phonics is taught well in key stage 1. Teachers use a range of stimulating activities to engage and challenge pupils of different abilities to develop their understanding, which they use to good effective when reading. Most-able pupils in key stage 1, who read to me, read difficult texts with confidence, expression and fluency; the less able pupils used their knowledge of the sounds letters make to successfully tackle unfamiliar words.
- Writing standards have improved significantly because you have successfully addressed the improvements that needed to be made. Published information for 2016 shows a strong improving trend, most noticeably for those pupils working at a higher standard. A close analysis of pupils' written work during the inspection, in both key stage 1 and key stage 2, confirmed that pupils currently in the school are making good progress from their different starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics lessons continues to improve, particularly around the routine challenge of activities, so pupils make more rapid progress from their different starting points
- pupils spell simple words correctly and apply spelling rules consistently.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds (RC), 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

Alan Chaffey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, senior leaders, other staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I took account of the 17 free-text opinions from parents and the 18 responses to Ofsted's online

questionnaire, Parent View. I considered the 18 responses to the pupil survey and the 18 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I talked to pupils informally during breaks and lessons and I listened to several pupils read. I visited lessons with you to observe learning in progress and examined pupils' work in their books with your senior leaders. I considered a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, and leaders' records for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.