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Mrs D Edwards
Headteacher
Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic School
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Dear Mrs Edwards

Short inspection of Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic School

Following my visit to the school on 4 May 2016 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2014, you have made sure that pupils' welfare, personal development and achievement are central to the work of the school. You are very well supported by the deputy headteacher, who was appointed in September 2015. You have secured a cohesive team of staff who fully support your resolve to achieve excellence. Staff morale is high. There is a clear drive by everyone to secure continuous improvement. You have forged effective partnerships with the local authority and local Catholic schools. Expertise is shared, including the accuracy with which teachers assess pupils' achievement. You liaise closely with an outstanding school and have embraced their strategy of developing a team approach to school improvement.

You have made good progress since the previous inspection. Your new middle leadership team has transformed the development of teaching, learning and assessment. Middle leaders work very well together to support and advise each other and do so in an atmosphere of transparency, trust and honesty. This has enabled most of the school's and individual teachers' priorities to be implemented, developed and monitored carefully. Leaders use all the available information to make accurate judgements. This includes consideration of the outcomes of pupil progress meetings and performance management targets, which are linked to specific training. There is now greater reflection, a willingness to experiment and to

try out new ideas. You encourage teachers to take control of their own professional development, which they have grasped wholeheartedly.

The impact of the work to raise pupils' achievement in writing can be seen in above-average attainment at the end of both key stages. The implementation of a new curriculum has provided pupils with relevant and stimulating contexts to write for a purpose and for meaning in a range of different subjects. Year 1 pupils were observed applying their writing skills in a science lesson, explaining one of the theories as to why dinosaurs became extinct. Year 2 pupils write in the first person an account of a knight's adventure, where their teacher encourages them to extend their writing skills using adverbs. The recent focus on developing and extending children's early literacy skills is paying dividends. Children use their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to read and write with confidence and increasing accuracy their version of the story *Jack and the Beanstalk*. In 2015, the proportion of children achieving the early learning goals in reading and writing was above average. Your focus on developing pupils' love of reading, through library clubs, projects and a buddy system where Year 6 pupils read with younger pupils, has been enhanced by the recently refurbished libraries funded by the parent-teacher association.

As a result of a new marking and feedback policy, pupils are given helpful and timely advice on how to improve their work. This gives them the confidence to assess their own progress and to keep striving to do even better, because they understand what they need to do next.

Disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as their peers, particularly in reading. Your school improvement plan focuses on improving outcomes for these pupils, identifies relevant strategies and has clear timescales. However, it lacks measurable targets based on pupil outcomes. This is particularly so when assessing the impact of additional government funding, the pupil premium, and the effectiveness of intervention strategies to boost the progress, attainment and attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

You make sure that the safeguarding policies, procedures and training are fully up to date, detailed, of high quality and implemented effectively. The well-being of every pupil is of paramount importance to adults and they are vigilant in their approach to pupils' welfare, both physically and mentally. All staff take great care of the pupils and know their individual needs exceptionally well. Pupils told me that they feel able to approach any adult to talk about any concerns they may have. Several pupils expressed great appreciation of the 'listening ear' of a trained teaching assistant who provides one-to-one mentoring. They say that it helps them and their families in times of stress. Those pupils who for a variety of reasons have low self-esteem also benefit from therapeutic interventions. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of safety, as it is woven into the new curriculum and they are given many opportunities to take on further responsibilities, such as the junior road safety officers, to develop their safety awareness. You and all staff follow up concerns diligently to ensure pupils receive the support they need. Staff are well

trained in identifying pupils who are at risk from any form of potential harm, including cyber bullying, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have a strong commitment and passion for nurturing and developing all pupils, both academically and personally. This is shared by all staff. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through all facets of school life. Our joint observation of Year 1 pupils who were totally engrossed in dancing to a hymn illustrates how pupils are encouraged to respond spiritually, creatively and physically to music and words of prayer. Parents and grandparents are regularly invited to share in pupils' achievements and partake in collective worship. Pupils are taught how to celebrate their commitment to their own faith, as well as showing respect, tolerance and compassion for other faiths and beliefs.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' understanding and skills across their areas of learning. They use this information to plan work which provides the right level of challenge in order to move their learning at the right pace. Typically, you encourage teachers to engage in small-scale research projects before rolling out any successful improvement strategies across the school. For example, Year 2 teachers plan different levels of work. Pupils told me they enjoy solving problems at different levels in mathematics, saying it makes them think hard. Pupils' work in books shows that their reasoning and thinking skills are helping them become fluent and capable mathematicians. The most able pupils rise to difficult challenges, confidently tackling the 'gold work', and then moving on to even more difficult work. They eloquently explained that they find column addition far easier and more efficient than using a number line.
- You have recently taken a firm stance on those pupils who are persistently absent, in order to encourage a small minority of parents who do not send their child to school regularly. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to remain well below average. This has a detrimental effect on their achievement and subsequent life chances. In 2015, this group of pupils made as much progress as their peers in mathematics, and to a lesser extent in writing. Nevertheless, they performed significantly less well in reading, compared to other pupils in the school and all pupils nationally. School information confirms that this group continue to underperform, particularly in reading and especially in key stage 1.
- Short- and long-term planning, including individual plans for disadvantaged pupils, attempts to address this underachievement, with myriad strategies to boost their progress. Leaders do not measure the effectiveness of these or the use of pupil premium funding well enough, particularly their impact on achievement and attendance. There are no measurable targets to make sure gaps between this group, their peers and all pupils nationally close quickly enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should:

- set measurable targets to close any gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers and all pupils nationally in all year groups, particularly in reading and in their attendance
- identify regular milestones to evaluate the impact of actions and adapt interventions when they are not improving pupil outcomes
- monitor closely the use and impact of the pupil premium funding to secure value for money.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of children's services for the London borough of Bexley and the director of education for the Diocese of Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and a group of pupils who were either school councillors, faith councillors or junior road safety officers. I spoke to the local authority's head of school improvement, and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a diocesan representative. Together with the deputy headteacher, we visited classrooms together and observed pupils and looked at pupils' work in books. I reviewed a number of documents including records of pupils' progress, parental questionnaires, school improvement planning and safeguarding records.