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Mrs R Ashworth
Headteacher
St Anthony's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Ashworth

Short inspection of St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 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 November 2011.

Since the last inspection, the previous headteacher retired. Following a 12-month period without a substantive headteacher, you then took up the position in June 2014. Since then the school's leadership strength has been reduced by periods of maternity leave. However, the team is now operating at full strength.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Although the school experienced some turbulence on the leadership team, you, the staff and governors have ensured that pupils' needs continue to be met well so they make good progress and achieve better than pupils in other schools across the country.

The strong sense of community is evident as soon as you enter the school. Parents and staff communicate easily, with you and teachers taking swift action to resolve issues. The majority of parents very much appreciate the care and support provided for their children. One parent commented, 'It is like leaving your child with family'.

Many members of the governing body are quite new to their roles. They are taking a strategic approach to developing the necessary expertise to support and challenge leaders. An example of this is the way in which they have identified specific schools and individuals to provide them with the relevant training they need to be effective. They carry out visits to see the school in action and, as a result, have a good understanding of the school's priorities.

Leaders and governors have effectively tackled the areas identified for improvement in the last report. Teachers consistently check how well pupils understand what they are learning and adapt activities if required so pupils make good use of learning time. The teaching of mathematics is more effective and teachers provide useful challenge so the most able pupils deepen their thinking and understanding. Consequently, almost all pupils make good progress in mathematics and the proportion that achieve above the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than in other schools nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors do all they can to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff checks are carried out rigorously and the recording of these checks is meticulous. Governors and staff have undergone appropriate training for their roles and responsibilities.

All concerns about pupils are recorded and referrals to outside agencies are made when necessary. You and the governors carry out a detailed annual safeguarding audit. Any aspects which are identified as being capable of further improvement are quickly actioned. Consequently, leaders provide a safe environment for the school's pupils.

Inspection findings

- You have worked with determination and conviction to establish the new leadership team and drive improvements. You have ensured that all staff meet your high expectations and follow the policies you have put in place. You are ambitious for the school and seek ways for it to become even more effective. Staff feel valued and supported by you. They recognise that the professional development they receive is valuable and has helped them improve.
- The leadership team checks teaching regularly and provides useful feedback to teachers to help them improve further. You sensibly take account of work in books and progress over time to assess how well teachers meet pupils' needs. Performance management processes link appropriately to the school improvement plan and pupils' outcomes so everyone knows what needs to be done for the school to become even better.
- Leaders' checks on pupils' progress are thorough and the school has devised its own detailed way of recording how well pupils are doing. Although this provides leaders with useful information about individuals and groups of pupils, it is too detailed to enable governors to see easily how well all classes and groups are doing.
- Governors know the school very well and have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. They check how well pupils are doing and ask you challenging questions.
- The support you provide for disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, is effective. The carefully planned and targeted support provided helps these pupils to catch up as soon as they show signs of falling

behind. As a result, these pupils do as well as their peers.

- The curriculum supports pupils' learning well, and opportunities to write are woven through the different topics. Teachers make good use of history and geography themes to develop pupils' skills in other subjects. This was evident in the Year 4 scripts pupils wrote about Boudicca, and the Year 5 Tudor house advertisement. Topic lessons are very popular with the pupils, several of whom said this was their favourite. The high-quality work they produce reflects their enjoyment and commitment to learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed very well, reflecting the faith and values which underpin the school. Leaders' plans to develop pupils' understanding of British values are in the early stages and there is more to do to embed them within the curriculum.
- Teachers plan lessons that take account of pupils' interests and motivate them to learn. Typically, effective support is provided for the lower-ability pupils and challenges are set for the most able. At times, the middle-ability pupils are left to their own devices and are not moved on quite as quickly as they could be.
- There is a consistent approach to planning, teaching and assessing learning. This ensures that newer teachers are well supported and pupils know what to expect from different teachers, so they settle quickly.
- The early years provision meets children's needs well. They settle quickly and effective planning identifies exactly where each child is and what they need to learn next. Clearly established routines help them settle quickly. It was impressive how well they sat listening to, and participating in, a story.
- Phonics and reading are taught well. Children in the early years enjoy the interactive lessons where they learn letters and link them to sounds. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to make sure pupils get opportunities to practise. Higher up the school, pupils use these decoding skills well to read unfamiliar words. As a result, consistently high proportions of pupils achieve the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check and the proportions of pupils who achieve the expected standards, and better than expected standards, are higher than those nationally.
- The whole-school approach to mathematics teaching has brought about a consistency from class to class. Teachers explain the concept and task clearly, making appropriate provision for the most able pupils to get started more quickly when possible. Through practical activities and solving problems, pupils explore and deepen their mathematical understanding. This was evident in the measuring activities in Year 2 and translation work in Year 6. The improved outcomes in mathematics reflect how well teaching meets pupils' needs, with pupils now doing as well in this subject as they do in reading and writing.
- The school encourages pupils to be healthy; they learn about healthy diets and the positive effects of exercise. Year 4 pupils were very keen to tell me about the science experiment involving an egg, which showed them the effect of drinks on their teeth.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. Pupils treat each other and adults with respect and good manners. In lessons, pupils have lively discussions and share their ideas with enthusiasm, reflecting

their positive attitudes to learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- achievement information is presented clearly so governors can hold leaders fully to account
- teaching meets the needs of all group of pupils, including those in the middle ability group
- British values are fully embedded within the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Portsmouth (Roman Catholic) and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other leaders. With you, I visited each class, where I observed teaching, spoke to pupils and scrutinised work in pupils' books. I met with the diocesan adviser and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body and the safeguarding governor. I spoke to pupils informally at lunchtime, met with a group of pupils from Years 2 to 6 and took account of the 12 pupil responses to the questionnaire. I spoke to some parents before school in the playground and considered the 78 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The 20 responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered. I analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.