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Mr Jared Brading  
Executive Headteacher  
St Mary's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Lockington Road  
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London  
SW8 4BE

Dear Mr Jared Brading

### **Short inspection of St Mary's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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.**

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

The closely knit staff team works well because of your effective partnership with the associate headteacher. Leaders have a desire for all pupils to achieve highly. You have managed a high staff turnover effectively and an extensive school rebuild over the past year. Every effort has been made by governors and leaders to keep pupils safe while building work on the site continues. You have been positive, and have carefully steered the school's direction to ensure that the well-being and progress of pupils has not been negatively affected. The school is well supported by the other federation school, of which you are executive headteacher, to help build leadership capacity and train new staff. As a result, pupils continue to be taught well and make good progress in their learning.

Pupils report that they are happy at school, and are doing well in their learning. They have positive relationships with adults who help them know what they need to do to improve. Pupils are encouraged to attend school every day and understand how missing school affects their learning. Pupils behave well and are attentive during lessons. Although pupils, particularly older pupils, dislike the inconvenience of the construction work, they are looking forward to their new school.

Leaders have taken effective action in order to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The early years leader has worked effectively with

the link federation school to make improvements in this part of the school. Teacher-led and child-initiated play activities are now clearly linked to areas of learning. Furthermore, you have worked effectively to ensure that staff understand how activities can be better planned to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils learn well over time.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Rightly, you have identified that more needs to be done to ensure that outcomes in the early years improve still further, and that there is room to improve some aspects of governance. Improving pupils' attendance is also a focus for leaders.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. They see this as a priority. The checks on the single central record and recruitment practices are in place. Governors are trained and ensure that arrangements for child protection are up to date and reported on at governing body meetings. Staff and volunteers have attended training for the most up-to-date guidance, including the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation.

Teachers ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, such as by teaching them how to be safe online. If pupils have worries or safety concerns, there is at least one adult who they could approach for support. They believe that bullying is 'uncommon' and that the school has sanctions in place that work, so pupils generally behave well. The school works in strong partnership with outside agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive timely and effective support.

### **Inspection findings**

- The first key line of enquiry was to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions to improve reading and phonics. Last year, the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations in reading at the end of early years, key stage 1 and in the Year 1 phonics check decreased. I wanted to look in particular at the achievement of boys, disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils.
- My visits to lessons with leaders identified that those pupils who did not reach the age-related expectations in reading or phonics last year have caught up. Children in the early years make good progress and are improving in their ability to associate sounds and letters with words.
- Pupils are provided with enjoyable books which engage them, develop their language skills and inspire their writing.
- Phonics development is a high priority for children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1, and is explicitly taught in discrete activities as well through writing sessions. As a result, pupils are confident in using their phonics knowledge. The school's assessment information suggests that a higher proportion of Year 1 pupils have reached the expected standards in phonics this year. Inspection

evidence, including hearing pupils read in lessons, indicates that rates of progress in reading are improving over time. As a result, your actions to improve pupils' reading and phonics are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

- We agreed that another key line of enquiry would relate to the impact of leaders' actions to improve outcomes for the most able pupils in mathematics. Last year, the progress of the most able pupils at key stage 2 was below the national average.
- Scrutiny of current pupils' mathematics books shows that work is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. The most able pupils are challenged to improve their skills, and make good or better progress. These pupils are attaining highly. Your work to improve the quality of mathematics teaching and to extend teachers' understanding of mastery in mathematics to challenge all pupils is having a positive impact. Your assessment information suggests that key stage 2 outcomes in mathematics, particularly the proportion of pupils working at greater depth, will exceed targets. In key stage 2, pupils with high prior attainment are currently working at greater depth in mathematics.
- The third key line of enquiry related to attendance. Although not identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection, over the past two years attendance has been below the national average. Persistent absence last year was in the highest 10% nationally. Discussions with leaders and school records show that pupils' attendance is monitored closely. There is a particular emphasis on ensuring that the most vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend regularly. The school uses the education welfare service and a learning mentor to support targeted families who find regular attendance difficult. Attendance information for current pupils shows that although persistent absence is still high, it has improved. You agree that work in this area must continue to be a priority.
- I also looked at the effectiveness of governors in improving their knowledge of the work of the school. Scrutiny of school documents and discussions with governors show that governors have a better understanding of the quality of teaching within the school. This is due to a programme of learning walks and the wider work of the curriculum and achievement committee. Governors receive termly updates from middle leaders and conduct interviews with the school council to find out about the standards in school. Leaders and governors acknowledge that further work is needed to ensure that governors check the school's progress towards targets regularly and systematically, not only at the end of the year.
- The final line of enquiry considered the steps taken by leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning in early years. Last year, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of Reception Year was below average. Aspects of the early years provision were identified as needing improvement at the previous inspection.
- Our visits to lessons and interventions in Nursery and Reception classes highlighted that children are making good progress towards achieving the early learning goals. Early years staff have worked effectively to provide a consistent

focus on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills in all activities.

- Children who are late joiners and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support to catch up. Children who start the school in Nursery with low starting points make good progress to reach age-related expectations by the end of Reception, and are prepared well for key stage 1.
- Although improvements have been made, and the progress of some children is very strong from low starting points, the proportion of children expected to reach a good level of development this year is lower than average. The early years leader has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development and has plans in place to improve children's outcomes still further so that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development increases.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- rates of absence and persistent absence reduce to being at least in line with national averages
- the proportion of children in the early years reaching a good level of development is at or above national averages
- there are regular check points for governors to monitor the school's progress towards targets they set, particularly in relation to pupils' attendance and children's outcomes in the early years foundation stage.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the governing body, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wandsworth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Karla Martin-Theodore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, staff, pupils, one of the co-chairs of the governing body and three other governors. I also held a meeting by telephone with a representative from the local authority. I listened to pupils read aloud in lessons and interviewed a group of pupils. I spoke informally with other pupils in lessons. I met with the designated safeguarding lead and looked at information provided by the school in relation to safeguarding practices. I looked at information about pupils' progress and the school's assessment of its performance. I

visited lessons in all key stages. You, the associate headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator accompanied me on my short visits to lessons in all key stages. I also looked at work in pupils' mathematics books and guided reading records in lessons. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, for these to be considered.