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Mr S Callaghan
Headteacher
St Vincent's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale
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Dear Mr Callaghan

Short inspection of St Vincent's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have developed a welcoming and happy feel to the school. There is a family ethos where pupils and staff thrive. Leaders are determined to provide the highest quality of education. The leadership team accurately evaluates the school's strengths and areas for further development. Together, you are implementing improvements across the school.

Governors also know the school well. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and priorities. They are proud of the school and are equally keen to raise achievement for all pupils. Governors ask clear and considered questions of leaders and are not afraid to take difficult decisions. They visit the school regularly to check on the quality of provision, always with a well-planned focus.

Staff who responded to the online survey state that they enjoy working at the school and are proud to be a part of it. Relationships between pupils and staff are supportive, warm and caring. Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite, well mannered and wear their school uniform with pride. Pupils are articulate, mature and a credit to their parents and the school. They were keen to tell me that everyone is friendly and happy. Leaders have created an exciting curriculum that ensures that pupils benefit from a broad range of experiences. Consequently, pupils love learning and enjoy their time at school.

Parents are very positive about the school. They typically commented: 'My children are very happy at the school. All staff are very welcoming and it is apparent on a daily basis that they want to do the best for each child.' Many parents were keen to praise the rich opportunities that children experience across the wider curriculum.

Leaders have dealt effectively with most of the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. The first required teachers to provide more opportunities for pupils to explore, investigate and work together. It was evident during lessons and in pupils' work that they have many opportunities to deepen their learning in a wide range of activities. A particular example of this was when pupils challenged themselves in mathematics by proving how they had worked out different problems. They shared and discussed their methods and listened to each other with respect. Pupils work well together and support each other admirably. They say that they enjoy learning most when they have to think for themselves.

The previous inspection identified that leaders needed to ensure that lesson observations focus on how teaching is helping pupils to deepen their understanding and skills. It was evident in the information you provided that lesson observations now have a clear purpose. You and your leadership team have established effective monitoring systems. Leaders analyse assessment information to improve the learning and progress of pupils. They review and check teaching in all subjects and consequently outcomes are good. However, you agreed that teachers should have a deeper understanding of pupils' starting points so that all can achieve their potential, especially the most able pupils.

Finally, the last inspection reported that teachers needed to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils, especially in mathematics. Your work in this area has been more successful in reading and mathematics. Leaders have led improvements to teaching and learning across the school, providing many opportunities through staff training and sharing good practice. Over the last few years, published performance information shows an improvement in progress in reading and mathematics for the most able pupils in key stage 2. This lines up with what I saw in lessons and in pupils' books. However, further improvement is needed in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements across the school, including in the early years, are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff and governors receive regular training so their knowledge of good practice in safeguarding is kept up to date. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school. They make sure that no member of staff begins their employment until all the necessary checks have been completed.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know that their teachers will look after them if they have any worries. They have a good understanding of what bullying is and were all in agreement that, 'It does not happen at our school.' Pupils understand how to keep safe in different situations, especially when they are using

the internet. Parents share the view of pupils and state that, 'It is a lovely, nurturing, safe and caring school.'

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these considered how effectively leaders improve the achievement of the most able pupils in key stage 1. This was because in 2016 and 2017 the proportion of pupils who attained greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average. Leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make. The teaching of phonics is strong across key stage 1. Teachers build on this good foundation through a consistent approach to the teaching of reading. Pupils have opportunities to develop their reading comprehension skills in a more structured way. The teaching of mathematics has improved in response to high-quality training. In pupils' books it was evident that they have many opportunities to challenge themselves through problem-solving and reasoning activities. As a result, achievement for the most able pupils improved in reading and mathematics in 2017. In writing, teachers now use engaging texts to capture pupils' imaginations and provide them with opportunities to write for a real purpose. Pupils are keen to write and enjoy challenging themselves. However, you recognise that the progress of the most able pupils in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics.
- The second key line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders are raising standards in writing by the end of key stage 2. In 2016 and 2017, attainment and progress by the end of key stage 2 were below the national average. You are working well to improve standards in writing, including through regular evaluation of the quality of teaching. Teachers have access to relevant training to improve their subject knowledge. Barriers that pupils face in their writing have been identified and acted upon. Pupils' language skills are promoted by using high-quality texts that introduce complex and stimulating vocabulary. You have also ensured a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics, spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school. As a result, pupils are using their improved skills to good effect. However, you acknowledge that more needs to be done so that standards of writing improve, especially for the most able.
- Another key line of enquiry considered the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This was because in 2016 attendance data showed that these groups of pupils attended less frequently than others. You have established effective systems to track the attendance of all pupils. Unexplained absences are followed up immediately. When necessary, you offer good levels of support to families who are more reluctant to send their children to school on a regular basis. As a result, attendance for all pupils in 2017 was in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils in key stage 1 are challenged further in their writing
- pupils in key stage 2, especially the most able, make more rapid progress in their writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rochdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Kynaston
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. Together, we visited classes, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at examples of their learning. I listened to pupils read and observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around school. I reviewed documentation about safeguarding which included the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I spoke with pupils about safeguarding and different aspects of their work. I reviewed leaders' records of their monitoring of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I took account of 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 21 free-text responses. I also took account of 16 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 111 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.