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24 January 2018

Mr Peter Gair
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Dear Mr Gair

Short inspection of St Pius X RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2018, 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since your appointment, soon after the last inspection, you have led the school from strength to strength, ably assisted by your deputy. Pupils' progress has accelerated. In the last two years, the progress of pupils by the end of key stage 2 has been exceptional, well within the top 10% of schools nationally in reading and mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has been considerably stronger than that of other pupils nationally. In the last two years, despite entering school with skills, knowledge and understanding below those which are typical for their age, every pupil has reached at least the expected standard in reading and mathematics and most pupils have accomplished the same in writing. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils have exceeded this standard. Consequently, pupils leave very well prepared for secondary school. Although pupils make strong progress in key stage 1, you agree that because of some historically less effective teaching, a few most-able pupils have not reached the high standards of which they ought to be capable.

You have challenged and supported the whole school community to put their best foot forward and pull out all the stops to achieve the maximum for each pupil. You have listened to staff and pupils and empowered them to contribute to the school's

improvement. You have secured the support of parents and carers. This work has helped to develop a strong culture of learning and behaviour in pupils, and strong levels of professionalism in the staff. The stimulating and rich experiences adults make available to pupils are manifest in the high-quality displays throughout the school.

Governors bring a range of relevant skills and experience to the table. The governing body understands well the strengths and areas for development. Governors are not in the least bit complacent about the strong trend of achievement and they challenge you to do even better. The governing body, aided by an external independent consultant, places you under a sometimes uncomfortably bright spotlight, which you welcome.

Inspectors, at the last inspection, challenged leaders to improve mathematics teaching and outcomes. The work in pupils' books suggests that they are sustaining the exceptional progress in key stage 2 seen over the last two years. This is because mathematics teaching throughout the school has improved substantially. You recognise that teachers need to give pupils more opportunities to attempt, in subjects such as science and geography, the tricky problems pupils get to try in mathematics lessons.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders' attention to detail in all they do is evident in the thorough records they make of concerns, conversations, correspondence, meetings and actions regarding pupils at risk. Where necessary, leaders have secured help for pupils from external professionals, reporting serious concerns in a timely way to the local authority.

You have ensured that adults are well trained, for example about the risks of pupils becoming subject to extremist views. Adults are diligent in communicating any concerns to leaders. The school site is safe and access arrangements ensure appropriate barriers to any potential intruders.

The pupils I listened to said that adults are good at sorting out disagreements between pupils and that they deal with bullying effectively. Pupils' excellent behaviour in lessons, and the way in which they follow the rules at breaktimes, contributes to them being and feeling safe.

Inspection findings

- You have established rigorous systems and processes to effectively check the quality of teaching and meticulously keep an eye on the progress of groups of pupils and individuals. You have fully involved the teachers and teaching assistants in their own improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes have improved substantially and continue to improve. Teachers know precisely which parts of their teaching they need to work on, and when they have cracked those aspects they work to refine their skills further.

- Teachers challenge pupils of all abilities well in mathematics. Because the subject knowledge of teachers is strong, they are successful in helping pupils to become fluent in working with numbers and giving pupils challenging problems to solve. Adults make sure pupils get to use mathematics equipment to help them secure conceptual understanding. This effective teaching ensures that, despite their low starting points, as many pupils at the end of key stage 1 reach the expected standard as do nationally, and progress by the end of key stage 2 in mathematics is exceptional. You agree that a handful of pupils by the end of key stage 1 ought to be able to demonstrate learning at greater depth. In addition, you agree that teachers need to give pupils more opportunities to practise and apply their mathematics learning in other subjects.
- Along with middle leaders and other staff, you have developed a stimulating, relevant, broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils enjoy rich and varied experiences. Teaching in history, art and design and religious education (RE) is particularly strong. Pupils, for example, get to use a range of materials to create two- and three-dimensional art pieces of high quality. RE makes a strong contribution to pupils' understanding of, and respect for, religions other than Christianity and for those who choose not to follow any religion. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to write purposefully and at length in a range of subjects. This contributes to their well-developed writing skills. You recognise that teachers need to teach more geography and that the degree of challenge for pupils in science varies throughout the age range.
- Children enter the early years with skills, knowledge and understanding below those which are typical for their age. The proportions of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has increased considerably year on year so that it is now broadly average. This represents at least good progress. The relatively new early years leader has improved provision substantially. Phonics teaching is effective. Adults rightly emphasise children's language development, so children are encouraged to talk and listen. Children sustain interest and concentration in their activities and adults intervene in children's learning to make it more challenging. There is scope for a few more children to exceed the early learning goals in more areas of learning.
- The systematic teaching in key stage 1 is exemplified in the teaching of writing. Teachers work hard to ensure that no pupils slip through the net. They concentrate on getting pupils to write accurately. They have high expectations. You and other leaders keep a close eye on the progress of those pupils in key stage 1 who are beginning to learn at greater depth. However, some pupils in key stage 1, primarily the most able, have historically experienced some less strong teaching so still have some catching up to do to reach the standards of which they are capable.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the few pupils in key stage 1 who did not achieve highly in the early years but nevertheless have greater potential are working at greater depth by the time

they move to Year 3, and the few most-able children in the early years exceed more of the early learning goals

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and apply challenging mathematics problems in a range of subjects
- teaching in those subjects that are not taught as well as English and mathematics, in particular geography and science, further improves.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, we visited the early years, Year 6, and classes in key stage 1 to observe the quality of teaching and learning. With the deputy headteacher, we looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks. I examined school assessment information and several documents, including the school self-evaluation, school improvement plan, leaders' notes of the checks on the quality of teaching, governing body minutes and safeguarding records. I observed the pupils at play and chatted with pupils as they ate their lunch. You, your deputy, and I had regular discussions about the impact of the actions you have taken, and about safeguarding. I had a brief discussion with the early years leader. I had a telephone conversation with the independent consultant whom you deploy to provide challenge and support. I questioned a number of parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the 50 responses to the Ofsted parent survey, Parent View, including eight written responses. I looked at the 41 responses to the online pupil survey and 11 responses to the online staff survey.