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Mrs Julie Sutherland
Executive Headteacher
St Mary and St Joseph Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School
Maxwell Road
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Dear Mrs Sutherland

Short inspection of St Mary and St Joseph Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

As executive headteacher, you provide inspirational leadership and lead the school with determination. You are ably supported by your assistant headteacher and have the full support of and confidence of your staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers. The school's Christian values and vision that St Joseph and St Mary Catholic Primary School is a 'place to love, inspire, grow and serve' are woven through all aspects of the work of the school.

The school has a welcoming, friendly and harmonious atmosphere where polite and enthusiastic pupils work hard and behave exceptionally well. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Pupils are keen to do well and consequently apply themselves diligently in lessons. Pupils listen carefully to adults' instructions and explanations and settle quickly to their work. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well.

All of the parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire Parent View stated that their children were happy, safe and making good progress. As one parent commented:

'This is a lovely community school – caring and supportive. My children are making excellent academic progress and feel well cared for, safe and most importantly enjoy going to school.'

You know your school well and have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development. You have a clear plan for improvement and you work effectively with your team to tackle weaknesses. You make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and provide training and support for all staff where needed. You hold teachers rigorously to account for the progress their pupils are making. This sharp focus on securing good-quality teaching throughout the school is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

In 2017, by the end of key stage 2 pupils made good progress in reading and writing. Standards were above the national average. You have rightly identified that middle-attaining pupils could have made stronger progress in reading and are taking action to address this. In 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics was well below the national average. Consequently, standards were below average. However, school assessment information and work seen in pupils' books suggest that current pupils are now making faster progress in mathematics as a result of the action you are taking, and standards are rising. However, you are aware that more work needs to be done.

Governors provide you with strong support and challenge. Governors acknowledge the poor progress and below-average attainment of pupils by the end of key stage 2 in mathematics. Governors have worked with you to arrange external checks upon the effectiveness of teaching in mathematics and the accuracy of assessment. They are also making regular visits to the school to see the impact of the changes that you and other leaders are making. They are offering precise and robust challenge to leaders over the progress that pupils make.

You have successfully addressed most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. For instance, you were asked to ensure that teaching assistants were used effectively throughout the whole lesson. On our visits to classrooms, we saw teaching assistants working productively with groups of pupils, as well as with individuals. The area for improvement relating to mathematics is now being addressed through the whole-school focus on this subject.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leaders and the governing body have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The safeguarding and the well-being of pupils are of the utmost priority. Effective training for staff is in place and they are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance. Recruitment checks on staff are thorough and recorded in line with statutory requirements.

Pupils that I spoke to during the inspection agreed that the school is a safe place and that there is always someone to speak to or to help them if they have concerns. Pupils know what bullying is and what it is not and said that bullying is extremely rare at the school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe outside as a result of your work on 'bikeability' and road safety. Pupils know not to talk to strangers.

Attendance has been consistently above the national average since the last inspection.

Inspection findings

- At the start of my visit, we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry for the inspection. My first key line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders are improving the attainment of boys in writing by the end of key stage 1. This was because, in Year 2 in 2017, boys' attainment was well below that of girls.
- Teachers plan regular opportunities for boys to apply their skills by writing at length in a range of subjects. Teachers also choose quality texts for boys to read and use these to develop their writing skills well. In one classroom we visited, boys were enthusiastically using a text to find synonyms for the word 'eating'. They then chose to use words such as 'munching' and 'crunching' to further improve their writing. The school's own assessment information suggests that more boys are reaching the expected standard in writing than in 2017 and the difference between boys' and girls' attainment is diminishing.
- My second line of enquiry focused on leaders' actions to improve the progress of middle-attaining pupils in reading. This is because, in Year 6 in 2017, these pupils made weaker progress than other pupils from their individual starting points.
- Pupils are developing a love of reading. Pupils told me that they enjoy reading a range of books, fiction and non-fiction, and enjoy choosing these from the school's attractive and well-stocked library.
- Pupils, including middle-attaining pupils, read accurately and fluently. You have changed the way reading comprehension is taught and this is paying dividends. Pupils read challenging texts such as 'Stig of the Dump' and 'Kensuke's Kingdom' and use these to answer a range of precise questions which develop their reading skills well. You have rightly identified that this new approach needs to become consistent across the school to ensure that all pupils, especially the middle-attaining pupils, are challenged more effectively.
- My final line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders are addressing the progress pupils make by the end of key stage 2 in mathematics. This is because, in 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics was well below the national average. You have rightly identified mathematics as an improvement priority. You have reflected on the school's approach to how mathematics is taught and have taken action to improve it.
- You have introduced a new mathematics scheme which is supporting teachers to plan more effectively. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and they regularly ask pupils challenging questions to extend their learning. Pupils are often given time to talk to each other about their learning in mathematics. In one lesson we visited, for example, pupils confidently discussed how to subtract fractions with different denominators.
- Pupils' skills in number and calculations are secure. Recent whole-school training, led by the mathematics leader, and work with local schools have resulted in some teachers providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills through completing challenging reasoning and problem-solving activities.

However, our visits to classrooms and work in pupils' books showed that teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunities to tackle these more challenging activities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are given more opportunities to practise and apply their skills through more challenging and complex reasoning and problem-solving activities in mathematics
- the school continues to embed and strengthen the new approach to reading across the school to ensure that all pupils, including middle-attaining pupils, make good progress.

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 the East Riding of Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Randall

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your assistant headteacher and your leader for mathematics. I also met with four governors and a representative from the local authority. I talked with small groups of pupils informally in lessons and at lunchtime. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. Along with you and your assistant headteacher, I visited classes and looked at pupils' current English and mathematics books. I also listened to some pupils read. I took account of 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and 15 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.