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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr James Hannah
Headteacher
Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School
Seatonville Road
Whitley Bay
Tyne and Wear
NE25 9EG

Dear Mr Hannah

Short inspection of Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018 with Dame Nicola Nelson, Ofsted Inspector, 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your experienced and determined leadership has built on existing strengths in school while providing challenge to eradicate most weaknesses. The senior leadership team is an effective unit whose members work well together to manage daily operational tasks. It is ambitious to secure ongoing improvements for the benefit of all pupils.

Your deputy headteacher provides significant drive and energy in leading improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in school. She has a clear overview of strengths and weaknesses in teaching, and has devised a rigorous and comprehensive calendar of monitoring activities. The leadership team has accurately identified the strengths and current priorities for the school. Curriculum leaders are skilled in mapping out the knowledge and skills required for pupils in every year group, and are effective in managing their subject area through auditing provision and devising appropriate action plans. Assessment procedures require further development.

The governing body has built upon its positive impact on, and improvements to, its monitoring role in school, as identified during the last inspection. Effective recruitment has ensured that the governing body benefits from a wide range of professional skills. It is effective in challenging senior leaders and holding the school to account for pupils' progress and attainment. A strong and substantial foundation on which to build and take the school forward is evident in the school. The whole

school community clearly puts pupils at the very heart of everything that is done. You have ensured that the areas for improvement raised in the previous inspection report have been mostly addressed successfully. Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 has continued to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are completing detailed and complex mathematical problems, although opportunities for pupils to use reasoning skills in mathematics remain limited. The level of challenge in work set is generally pitched well, but this is not always the case, especially for the most able pupils. Although a large proportion of pupils reach higher standards at the end of each key stage, their progress is not yet consistently strong across key stage 2. Leaders have ensured that skilled teaching assistants are deployed effectively in lessons. They support pupils' learning very well, and provide additional programmes of support to those at risk of falling behind. Further work is now needed in the assessment of pupils' progress in other curricular subjects to identify any gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. In addition, leaders should ensure that pupils' progress and attainment in writing are further improved, especially in key stage 2. You have identified that these are not as strong as those found in reading and mathematics.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Classrooms are calm, well-ordered spaces in which to learn. Attractive and helpful displays promote learning, with areas for prayer and contemplation. Pupils appreciate the 'youth village' where they have time to think and spend time on personal reflection. The school council has led many charitable fund-raising initiatives, and has ensured improvements to the school grounds. Pupils have opportunities to find out about other faiths, have a sound grasp of British values such as democracy, and speak enthusiastically about learning about other world cultures. Residential visits to France are a real highlight for pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Policies, procedures and records are of good quality and regularly updated by the school's finance clerk. Staff and governor training is thorough and up to date. Catch-up training is organised for any member of staff who has missed key training or annual refresher training. The three designated safeguarding leaders work well together, with sound systems of communication ensuring that all information is effectively shared. All staff at your school are keenly aware of their duty to keep children safe and to ensure that all pupils have opportunities to thrive.

Pupils show high levels of respect for each other, their school and their local community. They are exceptionally well mannered, polite and courteous. You have also ensured that the curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety. Pupils know the dangers of social media and understand that they should never post personal details online. Pupils have full trust in the adults who look after them and report feeling safe all of the time. They assured inspectors that any minor disputes are immediately and effectively dealt with by all adults. Pupils can explain the different forms of bullying, but are not sure all bullying in school has been eradicated.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have been resolute in their determination to improve the quality of teaching, which, in turn, has continued to allow pupils to be successful learners. Pupils have continued to achieve well in all year groups. Most pupils are continuing to make strong progress in reading and mathematics in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Pupils' attainment has been high in published statutory assessment information, especially in 2017. Pupils are continuing to attain highly, as seen in the school's own assessment information and in a sample of pupils' books from the previous academic year.
- Most pupils are making strong progress in their learning in every year group. Teachers usually pitch work appropriately to pupils of all abilities, but this is not always the case. On occasions, teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve are too low. Consequently, work can sometimes lack challenge and does not move pupils' learning and understanding on quickly. Although progress made by pupils of higher ability is adequate, it is not consistently strong. The very small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group make good progress and achieve well. The deputy headteacher has ensured that provision for these pupils is well planned, and that their needs are met.
- Children get off to a good start in their learning in early years. Adults are skilled in supporting children's learning. Activities are carefully planned to both challenge and inspire children. The learning environment supports children's language and communication skills very well. Children show curiosity and inquisitiveness, and wonder in their learning. Most children begin the school's Nursery with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. They make good progress in early years, so the proportion who reach a good level of development by the end of the year is well above average.
- You and the senior leadership team have continued to address inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in school. The deputy headteacher has ensured that there is a comprehensive and detailed calendar of monitoring activities that allows all leaders to have a very clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Rigorous and detailed analysis of work in pupils' books and observation of learning in lessons result in specific improvement actions. These development points are pivotal in subsequent monitoring activities. Accurate and rigorous school self-evaluation is the basis for the detailed and targeted improvement plan. Work seen in books showed clearly that progress in writing in key stage 2 for some pupils does not match that found in reading and mathematics. Some poorer standards of presentation and quality of handwriting, repeated basic grammatical errors and examples of poor spelling were evident.
- The school's approach to curriculum planning has evolved in recent years, and is now based on a comprehensive curriculum map to ensure that all requirements of the national curriculum's knowledge and skills are taught. Leaders are increasingly skilled in auditing the quality of provision within their subject through observations of learning in progress and a regular analysis of work in pupils' books. Purposeful links are made with local providers, such as English Heritage or the Discovery Museum in Newcastle, for the supply of historical artefacts to

support the curriculum. Artwork was linked to a study of the great fire in Newcastle, and pupils benefit from high-quality provision in music through a local provider. Although pupils' learning and progress are assessed well in some subjects, in others, systems to check how well pupils are learning over time are not fully developed. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are missed. Leaders know that developing this is an important next step.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers share equally high expectations of pupils and pitch appropriately challenging work for the most able
- pupils' progress and attainment in writing are further improved, including in the quality of handwriting, spelling and punctuation, especially in key stage 2
- systems to assess pupils' progress and attainment over time are extended to include all creative and foundation subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Scott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. A meeting was held with six governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with a representative from the local authority. Meetings were also held with the deputy designated safeguarding leader and the school secretary.

Inspectors visited lessons in each key stage, including joint visits into key stage 2 with you. An inspector reviewed a sample of pupils' workbooks from last year alongside the deputy headteacher. Some pupils spoke to an inspector about their work and their views of the school. Pupils' behaviour at break- and lunchtime was observed. A range of documents was considered relating to safeguarding.

Inspectors examined the school improvement plan, the school's monitoring of its own performance and its assessment and tracking of current pupils' progress and attainment from the last academic year. An inspector scrutinised pupils' achievement in the 2016 and 2017 statutory assessments.

Inspectors reviewed the 88 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, as well as a number of comments made by parents using the free-text facility. In

addition, the 22 staff responses to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire were considered. The school's website was also scrutinised.