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19 April 2018

Mrs Anita Gallagher
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Dear Mrs Gallagher

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Infants School

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 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.

You have developed a strong senior leadership team. Together, you ensure a stimulating and calm learning environment in which pupils make good progress. You provide a range of opportunities so that pupils can read and write widely and often. For example, the introduction of 'stay and read' encourages parents and carers to support their children's learning. As a consequence, standards of achievement in reading and writing have improved, most notably in the early years.

Learning is purposeful and exciting because you provide a range of opportunities to engage pupils. Adults have high expectations of pupils. You and your team have developed many ways to make learning enjoyable, particularly in English. For example, you have developed a skills-based curriculum that focuses on developing pupils' communication and language. Pupils are positive about their learning and say that teachers help them learn and have fun. Your leadership ensures that positive relationships develop between adults and pupils which support pupils' learning. As a result, pupils are given the best learning opportunities regardless of any barriers they may have.

Governors are aware of the areas that you are improving and are supportive of this. They regularly meet with senior leaders to gain a better understanding of how well pupils are achieving. Governors continue to

make use of assessment information so that they can appropriately challenge the work of leaders.

You work effectively and with impact on the areas identified for improvement in the last inspection. Your leadership is making a significant difference to improvements in teaching. This is because you have accurately evaluated the school and know what still needs to be done. You recognise that some teachers need further support to improve their practice, and that middle leaders still need to make better use of assessment information. As such, you and other senior leaders are providing training, and this is beginning to impact positively.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the leadership team ensure that safeguarding is given priority across the school. Safeguarding and other related policies are regularly reviewed and are up to date. You ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding are high quality. Systems for checking the suitability of all adults who work in the school are in place and regularly monitored.

Appropriate training is provided for staff and governors so that all pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, are well supported. You and your staff team work closely with the local authority to provide guidance for supporting vulnerable pupils. Adults are vigilant and know what to do if they have any concerns.

Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe. They know that the adults look after them and are aware of who to go to if they have any concerns. They are taught how to stay safe and look after one another in lessons and during assemblies. Pupils typically say that their teachers are kind and that they are looked after well.

Inspection findings

- Together, we agreed to focus on three key lines of enquiry as well as the arrangements for safeguarding.
- The first area of focus was to check how well children are achieving in reading and writing in the early years. In 2017, the 'reading early learning goals' were below the national average.
- The indoor learning environment is bright and stimulating. It provides a wide range of opportunities for children to read and write. Teachers plan learning activities carefully to ensure that children of all abilities are given access to book corners and writing stations. Adults model language effectively. As a result, the indoor learning environment enables pupils to develop their communication skills well.
- Adults provide children with opportunities to develop their independence both through self-initiated learning tasks and when supported by an

adult. Adults regularly encourage children to speak in full sentences and praise them when they do. This promotes the use of language that children can develop in their writing. For example, children wrote down the questions they had been asking about the whole-class story. However, the same range of opportunities are not provided in the outdoor learning environment, where activities are not as well planned. At times, this means that learning time is lost.

- You and your early years team regularly check what is being taught and monitor the progress that children are making in the indoor learning environment. This has allowed further support to be planned for children who are not progressing as quickly as they should.
- Overall, children in the early years are progressing well. It is evident that they are used to the routines and enjoy reading and writing. In discussions, children communicate well using a range of vocabulary. The work in books shows that over time children are developing their writing skills. There are many examples of work that shows children writing in full sentences and at length, and most children's letter formation is accurate.
- Another focus for the inspection was to check how pupils make progress across a range of subjects. You have identified that this is not as fully developed in some subjects as in others. In addition, information on the school's website does not make clear how pupils' progress is tracked in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Pupils' work in books and displays around the school provide examples of a stimulating curriculum with a strong emphasis on writing. Work displayed is well presented and of a high standard. It includes subjects such as science and history and covers topics such as mini-beasts and dinosaurs.
- You and your teaching staff place strong emphasis on developing the 'whole child' and learning opportunities are extended beyond the classroom. These include extra-curricular activities that recognise physical education as an important aspect of the curriculum. Teachers place strong emphasis on developing the use of vocabulary and this is reflected in work that is displayed in classrooms and in history books.
- The curriculum is underpinned by the school's values of hope, love, peace and justice. Singing assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to develop their reading and to use actions, to develop their drama skills. Singing and drama are parts of the curriculum that pupils enjoy very much. Pupils are also provided with opportunities to visit city farms, art galleries and museums. This helps to develop their self-confidence as it encourages them to communicate and develop their vocabulary in different surroundings. This enables pupils to reflect on their own lives and to learn the importance of British values.
- However, you and your leaders are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils make strong progress across a wide range of subjects. Leaders are aware that there is some limited assessment information

available for some other subjects such as history and geography but not all. However, this makes it difficult to know how well pupils are achieving across all subjects. You have ensured that an effective plan to address this is in place and you will continue to monitor this aspect of the curriculum.

- The third focus of the inspection was to evaluate how well middle leaders support disadvantaged pupils. In 2017, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 was below national averages in writing and mathematics.
- From the review of work in disadvantaged pupils' books, it is clear that effective support is in place to help pupils who find the work difficult. They have developed a robust range of teaching opportunities to support all pupils who are falling behind, especially those who are disadvantaged. In discussions with middle leaders, it is evident that they know the starting points of individual pupils and the support required for those who are falling behind. For example, middle leaders have found effective ways to sharpen the teaching of phonics. Where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, middle leaders support teaching so that disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving. You and your leaders have accurately identified that middle leaders could make even better use of assessment information to support the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to ensure improvement in teaching so that it supports the needs of all pupils, including in the outdoor learning environment
- develop the curriculum so that there is a greater emphasis on establishing how pupils are developing their skills across a wide range of subjects
- ensure that middle leaders continue to develop their understanding of how best to use assessment information to track the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair 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 Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ogugua Okolo-Angus
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you, senior leaders and governors about the actions you are taking to improve the outcomes for pupils. I met with other leaders to discuss the work they are doing to support disadvantaged pupils in their reading and writing. Learning walks took place with senior leaders across the school. I reviewed the sample of pupils' work provided as well as curriculum and assessment information. I spoke with several pupils in classes and heard them read in lessons. I analysed a range of school documents that linked to safeguarding, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation. I looked at 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent view, as well as staff and pupil surveys.