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30 January 2018

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Dear Ms Hogan

Short inspection of St Bernadette Catholic Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Pupils achieve well. They make particularly strong progress in mathematics. Leaders and staff have worked effectively over recent years to plan interesting work that captures the pupils' interest and motivates them to work hard. At present, you are reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it extends pupils' knowledge and understanding in all subjects.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to set demanding tasks in all subjects to help the most able pupils do as well as they can. You have increased the levels of challenge for the most able pupils, especially in science, art and design and technology. The most able pupils enjoy learning and work is matched to their ability. Additionally, these pupils have taken part in science week challenges and general knowledge quizzes against other local schools. Even so, the proportion of most-able pupils attaining the high standard in reading and writing was below that found nationally. As you acknowledge, there is more work to be done.

Leaders were also asked to ensure that the playground never becomes too congested. You have reviewed the use of space and the improvements you have made have resulted in less congestion. Many pupils particularly enjoy games in the ball court, while others like the quiet area.

You and your staff are well supported by a committed and reflective governing body. Governors know the school well and are ambitious for the pupils. You provide governors

with detailed information that they use to assess the success of the recently formed federation with St Bede's Catholic Infant and Nursery School.

You have made sure that the school continues to be a happy and safe place where pupils enjoy learning. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the many activities available to them. For example, they talked confidently about their visits to the British Museum and the Royal Albert Hall. They know that there are adults who will help them if they are upset or have a problem. One pupil said, 'If we struggle, teachers help us with anything and everything.' There are many opportunities for pupils to contribute to the life of the school. These promote pupils' self-confidence and pride in their school. The pupils know the school values and say that everyone in the school community is thoughtful and shows respect for each other.

The behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They have a positive approach to work, listen carefully and answer questions confidently. You make sure that pupils learn about life in modern Britain. They learn about democratic processes, for example through the election of the school council representatives. Pupils learn about each other's cultures, promoting tolerance and respect for differences.

Parents and carers speak positively about the school. They value the work the school does to include all families in the school community. One parent said, 'Communication between the school and home is strong.' Parents of pupils who speak English as an additional language appreciate the support their children receive to help them learn English. Parents enjoy working on family homework projects with their children and say this homework enables them to help their children. Parents believe that the leaders listen and respond to their questions promptly.

There remain some areas for further development, including the deepening of pupils' reading skills, the extension of assessment to cover the whole curriculum and the effectiveness of support for disadvantaged pupils. These are explored in the inspection report.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of a high quality. Staff and governors receive yearly training and regular updates about current safeguarding practice. They know how to recognise warning signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and how to report their concerns. Records show that swift action is taken should the need arise. Leaders with specific safeguarding responsibilities work closely with outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being.

Leaders provide advice and guidance for parents to help them keep their children safe. Parents particularly appreciate the workshops and newsletters on how to keep their children safe when using computers, mobile phones and tablets.

Pupils speak knowledgeably about keeping themselves safe. They are aware of the dangers of using computers and what steps to take if they are worried. They think that

the school assemblies and class lessons on safeguarding help them recognise any dangers. They know the risks associated with local gangs.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the first key line of enquiry would focus on leaders' actions to improve standards in reading. In 2017, assessments show that Year 6 pupils made stronger progress in mathematics and writing than in reading over key stage 2. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 in reading was broadly average, but their progress in reading was below the national average. As a result, you and your leadership team have introduced changes to the teaching of reading. These changes are based on introducing pupils to a wider range of reading books to help capture their interest and imagination. They include Shakespearean plays and popular fiction such as 'The Sheep Pig' by Dick King Smith and 'Goodnight Mr Tom' by Michelle Magorian.
- Good examples were observed of the impact of these changes. Pupils generally demonstrated enjoyment in reading and those heard reading did so with fluency and understanding. Year 3 pupils gained from practising their reading aloud. Pupils in Year 6 were able to discuss the characters in the books and use quotations to justify their ideas. Good questioning enabled pupils to consider the characters and story plot. Pupils' books show that they are making good progress in comprehension and other writing tasks stimulated by their reading. The new reading books are also having a significant impact on pupils' vocabulary choices in writing.
- Pupils appreciate the variety of activities that leaders and teachers organise to develop their reading skills. One pupil said, 'Books inspire me to write my stories.' Teachers and additional adults provide extra support for pupils who find reading difficult. Leaders check the reading progress of pupils every six weeks to ensure that all are making good progress. Even so, the full impact of these strategies has yet to be seen. You acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure that the teaching of reading is consistently good and that pupils read independently and in subjects across the curriculum.
- The second key line of enquiry focused on the challenge for most-able pupils in all curriculum subjects. Leaders have identified the most able pupils and closely monitor their progress, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Opportunities are also planned for the most able pupils to deepen and extend their learning in science. The most able pupils are expected to reason and explain the outcomes of investigations and research. They have the opportunity to take part in science fairs with other local schools. As well as this, the most able pupils enjoy the opportunities of competing in general knowledge quizzes with other schools. The progress of current most-able pupils is closely monitored and is improving in English and mathematics.
- Beyond English and mathematics, the school does not yet have a system for assessing pupils' progress as they move through the school so it is not possible to account for pupils' achievement, including that of most-able pupils.
- The final key line of enquiry focused on the progress of disadvantaged pupils in reading and writing. Although disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment in 2017 were in line with other pupils, the school is considering what more can be done to raise these pupils' achievement.

- The school has implemented strategies to further support disadvantaged pupils. Their work is now being closely monitored by the class teachers and senior leaders to ensure that good progress is being made. Intervention and support are provided through extra sessions before and after school. Workshops help parents support their children with homework.
- However, leaders have not yet analysed the impact of the range of different interventions used to support disadvantaged pupils and so are unable to say how effectively the funding has been used. You are also aware that you need to introduce more precise measures to account for the progress of pupils as a result of intervention and support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is more systematic analysis of the impact of the actions taken to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
- pupils are given a range of reading experiences in the wider curriculum subjects to develop their skills, as well as their knowledge and understanding
- pupils' progress and attainment are tracked in all subjects of the curriculum so that the school can account for the achievement of groups of pupils, including the most able.

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 Lambeth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Hawkes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the senior leadership team, three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and the local authority adviser. I evaluated the work in pupils' books with a group of subject leaders. I visited classes from Year 3 to Year 6 to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. I spoke to pupils in lessons and around the school and also met with a group of pupils from the school council. Records about keeping pupils safe and pupils' attendance were evaluated. I met with a group of parents and considered the two responses submitted on Parent View.