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Mrs Gillian Napier
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Riversmead
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Hertfordshire
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Dear Mrs Napier

Short inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 June 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 your school was judged to be good in October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You offer strong and passionate leadership that is highly valued by staff, governors and the local authority. You provide your team with a clear vision of the school's future development and you ensure that they contribute meaningfully to your decision-making processes. You are also eager for pupils to play an active role in the school's development. For example, you involved them in a recent review of the school's behaviour policy and you have supported them in establishing their own teaching and learning committee. You are rightly proud of the impact that your school's ethos has on its pupils and your staff. Staff care for pupils, nurture them and support them to succeed. Pupils enjoy coming to school; they get on well with each other and they enjoy learning, both in and out of the classroom.

You have high expectations of staff and pupils. Since your appointment in September 2016, you have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching across all classes. You have also introduced new, more rigorous, approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness. As a consequence, leaders and teachers have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and what they should expect of others. You are accurate in your assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses and your improvement plans are focused on appropriate priorities. However, you acknowledge that it is difficult to measure the impact of certain aspects of your improvement plans as, at times, their expected outcomes

are not clear.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection. Staff are grateful for the high-quality training that they receive both collectively and as individuals; they are very positive about the informal support they receive at their weekly 'Thursday masterclass' with senior leaders. Support for newly qualified teachers is strong. The majority of staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire agreed that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support their improvement.

Children continue to make a good start to their education at St Augustine's and a higher-than-average proportion of them attain a good level of development by the end of Reception Year. By the time they reach the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment at the expected standard continues to be above average. In 2017, pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 2 improved in reading, writing and mathematics compared to previous years.

Governors provide you with highly effective support and challenge; they, too, know the school well and they are passionate about its continued improvement. Governors support the school's development through their contributions at full governing body meetings, their two committees and their visits to meet school leaders. Both you and governors are in agreement about the need to ensure that all pupils, especially the most able, make the progress they should, and that they do this as a result of consistently strong teaching. You are also aware that some parents gave negative responses to certain questions in the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View; in particular, you are keen to improve communication between leaders and the school community.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Governors have a clear understanding of their safeguarding duties and they are effective in carrying them out. Leaders undertake all appropriate checks on staff and these records are scrutinised on a regular basis by a nominated member of the governing body. Staff are well trained and they know how to identify any signs that pupils are at risk. Staff understand the school's systems for reporting concerns and they say that safeguarding is a part of the school's culture. Safeguarding records are well kept and any child protection referrals are monitored robustly.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe through assemblies, visiting speakers and personal, social, health and citizenship education sessions. These cover topics such as e-safety, bullying and personal safety. Leaders ensure that the school site is well supervised and that pupils are well looked after in and out of class. Pupils say they are safe at school; staff, and the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, agree. Pupils say that, on the rare occasions it happens, bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- I pursued a number of lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school continues to be good. My first question related to the extent to which high-quality teaching, learning and assessment is improving the outcomes of current pupils across key stage 1.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers are now expected to plan learning in a more consistent and effective way across all classes, taking pupils' different starting points into account. Training has been regular, of good quality and focused on leaders' top priorities; for example, ensuring that all teachers provide pupils with a wide range of learning activities to ensure they are sufficiently challenged. Teachers now meet regularly with senior leaders to discuss their planning, review the impact of their teaching strategies and evaluate the quality of work that pupils complete.
- As a result of leaders' actions, pupils' progress is improving across key stage 1. Where progress is particularly strong, teachers provide work that is closely matched to pupils' prior learning. Teachers support pupils through high-quality questioning that clarifies any misconceptions and encourages them to move quickly onto new and more complex activities. Pupils make particularly strong progress when they select the most appropriate activity at the most appropriate time.
- Improvements in progress across key stage 1 are also reflected in leaders' assessment records and in pupils' workbooks. Pupils in Year 1 are making strong overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics, while pupils in Year 2 are currently performing better than similar pupils did at the same point last year. However, there are occasions when some key stage 1 pupils do not learn as well as they should. Some pupils do not always begin activities quickly enough; as a consequence, they can be less enthusiastic about learning. Sometimes, pupils select tasks that are too easy; in these circumstances, there is less challenge and learning is not as strong.
- A second line of enquiry related to how far leaders' actions are ensuring that the most able pupils make good progress in mathematics across key stage 2. Leaders now have a clear understanding of the factors that have contributed to recent underperformance; for example, some pupils struggle to understand the requirements of certain types of questions. Leadership of mathematics has been strengthened and a wide range of strategies have been implemented to support pupils to work at the higher standards.
- Following support from a local authority consultant, leaders have ensured that staff use assessment information more effectively and teachers offer additional challenge to pupils. In addition, extra opportunities have been created for teachers and teaching assistants to give additional instruction to small groups of key stage 2 pupils in order to prevent gaps developing in their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- As a result of leaders' actions, many of the most able pupils in key stage 2 are making improved progress in mathematics. This is particularly evident in Years 3 and 5, where pupils undertake activities that are very closely matched to their

starting points and where they are challenged and supported skilfully by the adults in the room. This is supported by leaders' assessment data and the work seen in the most able pupils' mathematics books. However, these improvements are not consistent across every class because the impact of leaders' actions is not yet fully secure; some most-able pupils still do not make enough progress from their starting points.

- Finally, I wanted check the extent to which leaders are ensuring that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning continue to be a key strength of the school. Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils. They negotiate class expectations with pupils and they implement them effectively in lessons. Pupils understand leaders' expectations and they value the rewards that they receive when they meet them; they particularly desire the 'golden tickets' that enable them to have access to additional activities at the end of the week.
- Pupils behave very well. They are polite, friendly and well mannered. In lessons, their attitudes to learning are very strong; they enjoy collaborating with each other and they develop positive relationships with their teachers. In corridors and at breaktimes, pupils behave appropriately; they are respectful of adults, visitors and each other as they move around the school. There are few incidents of poor behaviour. Occasionally, pupils' attitudes to learning can be less positive when learning activities are not sufficiently challenging. All staff, and the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, agree that pupils behave well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they secure recent changes to improve the progress made by the most able pupils in mathematics across all key stage 2 classes
- their strategies to improve teaching, learning and assessment continue to increase the levels of challenge across key stage 1
- they seek and consider parents' views, strengthening the school's partnership with parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Gee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, school leaders, other school staff, governors and groups of pupils. I also held a telephone interview with a representative from the local authority. Together, we made short visits to a wide range of classes to observe pupils' learning and to look at their workbooks. In addition, I reviewed a sample of key stage 2 mathematics workbooks alongside school leaders. I scrutinised the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, its development plan and other documentation, including the record of pre-employment checks and child protection records. I considered the 81 responses to Parent View from parents, including the 36 free-text comments. I also reviewed the 14 responses from staff and the 119 responses from pupils to the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys.