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9 February 2018

Mr Mark Cooper
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cooper

Short inspection of Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 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. Leaders have ensured that all areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection report have been addressed.

You became the substantive headteacher in September 2017, having previously undertaken the role on an acting basis since 2014. In this, you were supported by a part-time executive headteacher, who had been appointed by the Diocese of East Anglia. You already had a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Since taking on the substantive leadership of Sacred Heart, you have acted swiftly to address those areas which you knew needed to improve further. Your school development plan ties in closely with your accurate and regular checking of all aspects of school life. It identifies appropriate actions to ensure further sustained improvement.

The school's values are rooted in its Catholic ethos. Sacred Heart is a vibrant, happy and caring place where all enshrine the vision statement, 'Together we live and learn, we play and pray.' Additionally, the school is a 'Rights Respecting School' and this is reflected in displays in corridors and classrooms, permeating all aspects of school life. Parents and carers I spoke to at the start of the day and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed highly positive views about the school. One typically commented, 'I am very pleased with all aspects of the school and would highly recommend the school to other parents, they do a great job nurturing and educating our young children.'

Pupils behave extremely well at all times. In lessons, they show very positive attitudes to learning, responding quickly to instructions and showing high levels of engagement. Around the school, pupils' behaviour is never less than exemplary. They are polite and courteous to each other and to staff and visitors. Pupils spoken to during the inspection had no concerns about bullying and were confident that if they had any worries, adults would sort them out. Pupils' above average attendance reflects their enjoyment of coming to school.

The school provides a rich and varied creative curriculum. Pupils enjoy the special 'WOW' days that launch each new theme. Teachers plan interesting activities following on from these, to sustain pupils' interest and inspire their writing. For example, the Year 5 and Year 6 area is currently decorated to allow pupils to experience life at the time of the Black Death. Displays around the school reflect the breadth of the curriculum, which is enhanced through a variety of high-quality trips, visits and an extensive extra-curricular programme. During the inspection, I was impressed by the high-quality science work on display, following recent science-based thematic lessons.

Governors are well informed because they receive accurate and up-to-date information about the school. Consequently, they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Like staff, they have great confidence in you and appreciate your dedication and commitment.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a culture of high vigilance and the safeguarding of pupils is of paramount importance to all staff and governors. The school's single central record of recruitment checks of staff is fully compliant with current requirements.

All staff undergo regular and relevant training in all aspects of safeguarding. Additionally, safeguarding scenarios are routinely discussed as part of ongoing staff training. Consequently, all staff have an excellent understanding of their role in keeping children safe in school and the systems to report any concerns.

Inspection findings

- To confirm that the school remained good, one of my lines of enquiry was to see if there was evidence that the standards achieved at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2016 and 2017 were likely to be sustained.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was above average. The proportions exceeding expectations were above averages in reading and mathematics. At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, the proportions reaching age-related expectations were above average for reading and writing and average for mathematics. The proportions exceeding expectations at key stage 1 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics.

- In 2017, outcomes improved at the end of both key stages. At the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving and exceeding the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above average. At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion exceeding expectations increased but remained below average.
- You were pleased with these improvements. However, you have accurately identified that improving the proportion of pupils exceeding age-related expectations at the end of key stage 1 is a priority for further improvement. In order to achieve this, teachers are focusing on ensuring that they provide more opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth. We saw evidence of greater challenge for the most able in lessons. Additionally, we looked at internal tracking information and evidence from the work in pupils' books. These indicate that the high standards achieved at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 are likely to be maintained and built upon and that higher proportions of pupils are on track to exceed age-related expectations at the end of key stage 1.
- My second line of enquiry was about leadership and management because I wanted to ascertain whether there was evidence that the school has the capacity for sustained improvement. In your role as both acting and substantive headteacher, you have worked to ensure that teaching is good across the school, despite changes in teaching staff. As a result, high standards have been maintained at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2. There are effective systems in place to check on all aspects of school life. Checks are regular and accurate but currently rely mainly on yourself and your deputy. You have rightly recognised that leadership will be further strengthened by distributing it across more staff. You are beginning to include additional key members of staff in monitoring activities and have plans to further develop this approach.
- My next line of enquiry was about the early years. This is because the proportion of children achieving the expected good level of development at the end of this stage was below average in both 2016 and 2017. Until recently, the leadership of the early years has not brought about the improvement that you hoped for. However, a change of leadership since the start of this academic year, combined with a reorganisation of teaching staff, is now bringing about tangible improvements.
- New approaches to planning and organisation in the early years are ensuring a rich environment, particularly with respect to the development of language and early reading and writing skills. It is evident that current children are thriving and making strong progress from their starting points in in all areas. During the inspection, children were highly engaged by the 'dinosaur' theme. We saw a variety of opportunities both indoors and outside, designed to encourage even the most reluctant children to write. During the course of the day, all children were engaged in writing descriptive sentences about their favourite dinosaur and produced impressive pieces of work.
- School tracking information indicates that this year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is likely to be in line with that seen nationally in 2017. Evidence seen in children's learning journeys and their English

and mathematics books supports this. Your school development plan includes relevant actions to ensure that these recent improvements are sustained and built upon.

- My final line of enquiry related to whether all the recommendations from the previous inspection report had been addressed. One of these related to developing the teaching of early writing skills in Reception. My investigations into the early years indicate that this is the case, although this area had not been fully addressed until recently.
- Another area for improvement from the previous inspection report was to ensure that pupils received challenging work in writing and mathematics in key stage 1 and that teachers used assessments to plan effective teaching.
- Ensuring that all pupils are challenged at the right level has been an ongoing focus. The proportion of pupils exceeding age-related expectations at the end of key stage 2 has risen and is well above average. The proportion exceeding expectations at the end of key stage 1 showed improvement in 2017, although remaining below average. Your internal tracking information indicates that the proportions exceeding expectations at the end of key stage 2 will continue to increase and at key stage 1 will improve further. The work we saw in pupils' books supports this. Overall, published data, the work in pupils' books and internal tracking information provide evidence that teachers use assessment data effectively to plan work that is suitably challenging for all pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new approaches introduced in the early years are further developed in order to ensure that the proportion of children who meet and exceed expectations at the end of this stage improve
- the strong focus on providing appropriately challenging work for all pupils remains so that more pupils exceed age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1
- existing plans to strengthen leadership across the school by involving a wider base of staff are fully implemented.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed the work of the school with you, your deputy, the coordinator for special educational needs and three governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. You and I visited all classrooms together to observe teaching, learning and assessment and we looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school and also talked more informally with pupils in lessons about their learning.

I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for safe recruitment of staff. I considered a wide range of other documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its work and plans for improvement and external reports.

I took account of 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 36 comments received electronically. I also spoke with parents when they were delivering their children to school. I further considered 14 responses to the staff questionnaire and 38 responses to the pupil survey.