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10 May 2018

Mrs Carol Baron
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Baron

Short inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 April 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school has a very caring and nurturing atmosphere, and provides an environment where pupils feel safe and are keen to learn. Warm relationships between pupils and staff, underpinned by the school's values of 'compassion, creativity, forgiveness, hope, humility and responsibility', mean that pupils are well supported. Strong relationships also contribute to the caring character of the school. One pupil who spoke with me said: 'It is a perfectly safe school; everyone feels welcome here and no one is left out.' This view was unanimously shared by the other pupils. Pupils enjoy learning in a range of subject areas; they told me that they particularly enjoy solving problems in mathematics and conducting investigations in science. Classrooms, workbooks and corridor areas contain many examples of high-quality learning in art, creative writing and religious education.

Parents and carers appreciate their involvement in school life and the support that you provide. They told me that they are welcomed in school and that timely communication between staff and parents helps their children to thrive. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, express strong confidence in your leadership and appreciate the dedication of the staff team. 'St Peter's is a school where I feel my children are thriving through a fantastic ethos, great teaching and a wonderful environment for learning,' was a response which typified parents' views of the school.

You have developed the staff team well. Staff receive professional development which helps them to reflect on and improve their teaching. Those with leadership responsibilities approach their roles with rigour and enthusiasm, and they share your accurate view of the effectiveness of teaching. Subject leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas. They use these checks to help teachers and teaching assistants to plan tasks which challenge and inspire pupils. Consequently, the progress that pupils make continues to improve.

At the previous inspection, an area for improvement was to increase pupils' progress in writing. You have improved the teaching of writing, including by helping pupils to increase their range of vocabulary. Furthermore, you make sure that teachers give pupils feedback which helps them to review and improve their writing. As a result, pupils' progress in writing has improved since the previous inspection. However, you rightly recognise that, over time, the most able pupils in key stage 2 do not make enough progress in writing. We agreed to focus on this as a line of enquiry at the start of the inspection.

We also agreed three other lines of enquiry, and these included establishing how well leaders are improving the teaching of reading at key stage 1, so that more pupils reach the highest standard. The inspection also considered the extent to which disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving in mathematics at key stage 2. Finally, we examined the extent to which leaders make sure that pupils are safe and attend school regularly. These aspects are reported on in the following two sections.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective. All staff and governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding practices. As a result, staff are alert to the risks pupils face and report their concerns immediately. Staff record concerns carefully and follow them up appropriately. You work with other professional agencies and follow up with determination if you are not satisfied with the response you receive. Leaders ensure that staff, governors and visitors to the school are suitably checked and that records are maintained to a good standard.

Pupils who spoke with me are clear about how the school keeps them safe. They feel well informed about the risks they face outside school and when using the internet. Pupils told me that they trust adults to resolve issues as they arise, and that bullying and poor behaviour are extremely rare. Pupils play together happily, are clearly respectful to each other, and feel at ease at all times of the school day. Pupils and parents recognise the importance that the school places on the safety, welfare and well-being of pupils, and many commented on how well the school listens to their concerns.

Inspection findings

- In previous years, the most able pupils in key stage 2 have not made as much progress in writing as other pupils. Results of assessments in 2017 also showed the proportion of pupils achieving the highest standard in writing was lower than the national average.
- Leaders have implemented new approaches to teaching, so that pupils develop a wider vocabulary and better sentence structures to use in their writing. Teachers use their assessments of what pupils know and can do to set more challenging tasks. The most able pupils now write with greater creativity and imagination in English lessons. Their progress is improving as a result. Furthermore, the handwriting, spelling and punctuation in pupils' books are of a high standard. Pupils edit and redraft their work effectively as a result of the focused feedback they receive from teachers and their peers. Consequently, a higher proportion of pupils are writing at the highest standard across all classes. We agreed, however, that expectations of these pupils' writing are not high enough in other subject areas. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use their skills and knowledge in writing across the curriculum. This prevents them from making even better progress.
- Historically, a small number of disadvantaged pupils have not made enough progress in mathematics over time. Recently, leaders have made impressive improvements to the teaching of mathematics. Pupils' fluency and accuracy with number are very well developed, which supports their success when solving problems and explaining their thinking. Disadvantaged pupils across key stage 2 have frequent opportunities to develop, recall and apply their mathematical knowledge, and they are regularly required to reason mathematically. Those pupils in Year 6 with gaps in their mathematical knowledge receive additional support to catch up. This means that more disadvantaged pupils across key stage 2 are achieving the standards expected for their age, and their progress often exceeds that of other pupils in mathematics.
- You rightly identify how well the most able pupils at key stage 1 are challenged to achieve the highest standard in reading as a priority in your plans for improvement. We noted that the improvements leaders have made to the teaching of reading are having a marked impact on the most able pupils. Teachers have received expert professional development and they now provide more challenging materials for pupils to read. In addition, teachers question pupils skilfully in order to improve their understanding of language and to help them to build a wider vocabulary. Teachers' questions also probe pupils' understanding of texts and challenge them to infer meanings and make predictions. All of this is leading to the most able pupils now making strong progress in reading.
- Pupils' overall attendance is slightly below the national average. In recent years, too many pupils have missed a high number of school sessions. You have reviewed your procedures and have reorganised staff responsibilities to create the role of attendance officer. You challenge declining attendance promptly and act swiftly to make sure pupils are safe if absences are unexplained. Your work is enabling you to focus more specifically on the issues which limit the attendance of a minority of pupils. Consequently, you are working more effectively with pupils, their families and representatives of the local authority. You recognise the importance of helping some families to understand the importance of taking holidays only during school holidays.

Although the number of pupils who miss school regularly has decreased, you recognise there is still more to do to improve attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able writers have more opportunities to write to a high standard across a wide range of subjects
- staff improve the attendance of those pupils who regularly miss school.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Mirams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your leadership team. We reviewed improvement plans, information on current pupils' progress and your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. We conducted learning walks to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and we heard pupils read. I also met with members of the governing body and reviewed external evaluations of the school's effectiveness. I met with leaders who are responsible for standards in mathematics, writing and reading. Together, we scrutinised pupils' workbooks and information about their progress. I met with a group of pupils who shared their views on the curriculum, behaviour, bullying and keeping safe, including online safety. I scrutinised various safeguarding records, as well as meeting with your safeguarding leader, inclusion manager and attendance officer. I spoke on the telephone to a representative of Gloucestershire local authority and with your independently appointed school improvement partner.

I also considered the 42 responses to the staff survey and the 27 responses to the online survey, Parent View. I also spoke to parents at the start of the school day.