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Miss Stephanie Day
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Day

Short inspection of St John Evangelist RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Following your appointment as headteacher in September 2018, you quickly obtained an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness. Your actions to secure further improvements are focused on maintaining high-quality teaching and learning. For instance, you and your team have introduced 'non-negotiables' so staff are clear about leaders' expectations. Alongside this, you ensure that staff have opportunities to share and develop their teaching skills through a network of local schools. Staff feel well supported and morale is high. Parents and carers told me that their children are making good progress because of the effective support the school offers.

You are ambitious to strengthen the curriculum so that pupils' outcomes across all subjects are equally as strong as those found in reading, writing and mathematics. While this work is recent, there are clear signs that the changes you have made are raising standards. Nevertheless, further work is needed to ensure that these changes are fully embedded across all subjects, particularly in art and music.

You have worked closely with senior leaders and staff to ensure that the school is a welcoming and inclusive environment. Pupils are polite and respectful to adults as well as each other. In classrooms, pupils are supportive and considerate of their peers and are keen to ensure that everyone is included in activities and discussions.

Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths of the school and the areas for continuous improvement. You provide governors with accurate and detailed information about the school's effectiveness. Governors use this information effectively to hold leaders to account as well as to provide extra support when it is needed. For example, governors maintain strong oversight of the pupil premium funding and whether leaders use it well to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The chair of governors and other members of the governing body make regular visits to the school and fulfil their statutory duties.

Parents are positive about the school's work. Parents that I spoke to, and those who responded to Ofsted's survey, said that their children are safe and happy and praised the school's caring atmosphere. They particularly appreciate that the leadership team welcomes them and their children to school in the morning. You also provide parents with numerous opportunities to support their children's learning. For instance, parents spoke enthusiastically about the 'Stay and Learn' sessions which provide them with guidance on how to help with homework.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority at your school. Through my discussions with leaders and parents, it is clear that pupils' well-being is paramount among all members of the school community. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements and records are in place, accurate and up to date.

Comprehensive records show that all staff, governors and volunteers receive regular safeguarding training. This includes the latest government legislation. Staff and governors receive regular updates about current safeguarding practice, including case studies, to promote a culture of vigilance. Staff know the signs that can indicate that a pupil is at risk of harm and what they must do if they have concerns. Leaders have effective systems for the recruitment and induction of new staff, governors and volunteers so that all those who work in the school are clear about their safeguarding duties. Leaders work in effective partnership with outside agencies so that vulnerable pupils are kept safe. Pupils told me that they feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- Our first key line of enquiry considered the impact of leaders' work to strengthen the provision for children in the early years. This was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Furthermore, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year remains below the national average.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the quality of children's learning in the outdoor areas. Teaching is well planned and takes account of children's interests. Teachers give careful consideration to resources and activities that will motivate children to try new experiences, both independently and with support from adults. Attractive displays celebrate children's learning and help to build their confidence.

- You have ensured that teaching is effective in developing children's basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. For instance, in one mathematics activity, staff supported children to count objects accurately up to five by grouping objects and taking turns. In the writing area, children were keen to practise their communication and writing skills by creating story maps and retelling the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'.
- Assessment information and children's work show that children typically make good progress in all areas of their learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from effective additional support to ensure that they also make good progress and develop positive attitudes to learning. Leaders and staff check children's progress carefully and use assessment information effectively to plan how best to strengthen children's outcomes.
- Our second key line of enquiry explored pupils' writing outcomes in key stage 2, particularly those of boys. This was because provisional outcomes in the 2018 key stage 2 assessments indicate that boys' progress in writing, although good overall, was not as strong as that of girls. The previous inspection also recommended that leaders make sure that teachers routinely set work that is challenging enough.
- You have implemented a programme of professional development for all staff to secure improvements in the teaching of writing. This work has paid dividends. Teachers have high expectations and plan tasks that challenge pupils to aim high. Teachers keep a close eye on the quality of pupils' writing and adapt teaching so that it is closely matched to pupils' needs. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to edit their work and correct any mistakes. Pupils are keen to do this and improve the quality of their writing. Work in pupils' books shows that all groups of pupils, including boys, are making strong progress. This is because they benefit from well-planned opportunities to write at length and develop their writing skills in a range of genres and contexts.
- Nevertheless, the quality of pupils' handwriting, particularly that of boys, is variable. This prevents pupils from presenting their work as neatly as they could. You told me that handwriting is taught in key stage 2, and by the end of Year 6 pupils choose their own handwriting style. However, the inconsistent quality of handwriting in pupils' books indicates that further work is needed to support pupils to join and form letters correctly.
- The third key line of enquiry considered pupils' outcomes in the wider curriculum, and specifically whether pupils' progress in subjects such as history and science was as strong as that found in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You said that, in the past, teaching in subjects such as science, history and geography emphasised the development of pupils' writing skills. Using research to inform decision-making, leaders have reviewed the curriculum in all subjects to ensure that there is a sharper focus on subject-related content. Work in pupils' science and topic books shows that teaching and the curriculum are effective in supporting pupils' progression in subject-specific skills and knowledge. In science, for example, pupils develop their investigative skills by

making predictions and drawing conclusions. Teachers assess what pupils already know or can do and take this into account when planning tasks. For instance, pupils learn to use a map to plan a journey before progressing to using six-figure coordinates in the Year 6 topic 'Mexico and the Mayans'.

- Extra-curricular activities, including trips to the British Museum, London Zoo and the Tate Gallery, are used well to enhance pupils' learning. The school holds focus weeks throughout the year to support the recently introduced curriculum. Workshops presented by educational experts provide opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and religions. Parents are invited to 'showcase sessions' so that pupils can share their work with them.
- Overall, the positive effect of the changes you have made to the curriculum is clearly evident in the improving quality of pupils' work. However, your new approach is not fully embedded across all subjects. In particular, there is still work to be done in subjects such as music and art.
- Our final key line of enquiry explored whether leaders were taking effective steps to improve attendance. Persistent absence rates have increased over the last two years.
- Leaders analyse pupils' attendance rigorously. You follow up any concerns tenaciously and work closely with an independent educational welfare officer to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have instigated a number of initiatives, including weekly reward certificates and meeting with parents when pupils' attendance falls below 90%. This work has been successful. Levels of persistent absence have now reduced considerably.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- appropriate emphasis is given to the teaching of handwriting skills so that pupils develop neat and fluent handwriting.
- the work to improve the wider curriculum is fully embedded so that pupils' progress is equally strong across all the subjects they study.

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

Yours sincerely

Dawn Titus
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and members of the senior leadership team to discuss the school's self-evaluation and to agree the key lines of enquiry. I held meetings with governors and with a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with the school's improvement partner. I scrutinised a range of documentation and reviewed information on pupils' progress and attainment. I looked at the school's single central record of checks on staff, as well as checks on agency staff and volunteers. I visited classrooms with leaders to gather evidence on pupils' learning. I looked at a range of pupils' work and I spoke to pupils during lessons about their work. I met with leaders with responsibility for English, the early years and the curriculum. I took account of the 46 written responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 61 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.