

25 September 2018

Elizabeth Cahill
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cahill

Short inspection of St Agatha's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 June 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, your governors and staff have created a safe and nurturing learning community. Your motto, 'Learning together in God's love', permeates the life of the school. You have cultivated a climate of respect and tolerance, and prioritised the spiritual and emotional well-being of pupils and staff. As a result, pupils are happy and show the utmost respect for each other and the adults who work with them.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and do so regularly. You have systematically developed a learning environment that utilises every area of the large site. Classrooms are bright and stimulating. The school library sits at the heart of the school and is full of interesting and stimulating texts. The outside area is exceptionally well planned, offering distinct areas in which to play, learn, exercise, socialise and relax. Pupils were excited to show off their garden areas and proud of their healthy crop of tomatoes and cucumbers. Others wanted to show the walkways to their hideaways. Staff utilise the indoor and outdoor spaces to provide a broad curriculum that promotes pupils' imagination, skills and aptitudes. Pupils are well behaved, articulate and very keen to learn. A large proportion of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted online survey, and the vast majority were highly complimentary about the school, believing their children are happy and make good progress.

Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 benefit from a rich learning environment. Staff orchestrate creative and interesting activities that promote pupils' interest and imagination. For instance, Year 1 pupils proudly showed me their writing about the river Amazon and their 'Save the rainforest' posters. As a result, children in early years and pupils in key stage 1 make good progress from their starting points.

You have accurately identified several reasons for the disappointing 2017 key stage 2 outcomes and have worked hard this year to address them. Together, leaders and staff at all levels have introduced a number of initiatives to support pupils to make better progress. You have raised staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the most able. The new assessment system ensures that staff can check carefully on the progress pupils make and intervene quickly, if necessary. It also enables middle leaders to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils so that staff can offer appropriate support and guidance. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection. Consequently, initial results at key stage 2 this year indicate a rise in attainment and progress, particularly in mathematics and reading. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard is indicative of a marked improvement from last year.

You receive high-quality support and challenge from your committed governors. They are experienced and work closely with parents and the church community. Governors are proud of the school and have helped to make necessary improvements to ensure that pupils make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a safe learning environment where all staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard pupils. You provide up-to-date training for staff and governors so that they are clear about the potential risks to pupils, and know what to do should they have any concerns. You keep careful records of referrals to external agencies and ensure that actions are completed promptly. You understand the needs of particular families and support them to get early help when needed. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in line with current guidelines.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they feel safe at school. They receive regular information about how to stay safe in school and in the wider community. For instance, they spoke about road safety and how they learn to stay safe online. Pupils said that they would share their concerns with their teacher and are confident that they would receive appropriate help. The large site is maintained to a high level. Pupils gave examples of how some areas had been modified to make them safer. For example, non-slip coverings were added to wooden walkways, following a concern raised by the school council.

Inspection findings

- As a result of the 2017 key stage 2 outcomes, you and your team prioritised a number of areas that we focused on during this inspection. Initially, your priority was to improve the progress of pupils at key stage 2, particularly in reading. You decided to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve. You implemented a consistent approach to teaching reading, to ensure that, every week, pupils have opportunities to read for pleasure and meaning. The introduction of daily guided-reading sessions and challenging texts across the school has improved pupils' ability to read for inference and to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. Training for staff has improved their confidence in teaching the more complex and demanding aspects of reading. As a result, initial outcomes indicate that more pupils this year have attained the expected standard in reading.
- You and your leaders carefully check the progress of the small proportion of disadvantaged pupils. You are committed to ensuring that they make similar progress to that of all pupils nationally. However, this group did not make progress in line with their peers, or pupils nationally, last year. You now have a governor who focuses on championing the needs of pupil premium pupils and monitoring how the funding is spent. The needs of individual pupils are assessed and, where necessary, additional support is provided. For instance, this year, experienced teachers, including you and your deputy, offered one-to-one sessions to identified pupils to strengthen their progress. You check their attendance and act swiftly, should it start to be a concern. However, the approach to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points is not systematically embedded across the school.
- The school admits a number of pupils new to schooling in this country and at the very early stages of learning English. Some of these pupils are from military families and only stay for a short time before returning to their own countries. You and your staff work closely with parents to enable these pupils to learn English quickly and access the curriculum. Pupils spoken to during the inspection are happy with the emotional and academic support they receive in school. The new assessment system means that staff can check that these pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points.
- Improving pupils' writing skills at key stage 2 continues to be a priority. This year, the improvement in pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics was not matched in writing. However, you have developed a more robust system for teaching writing. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces for different audiences and purposes. Pupils are encouraged to edit their own work and that of their peers. Teachers then give detailed guidance on how the work might be further improved, which addresses another area for improvement from the previous inspection. Year 6 learning diaries reflect this process and show that pupils improved the quality of their writing throughout the year. However, across key stage 2, pupils need to make consistent progress to achieve highly by the end of Year 6.
- You have ensured that pupils make better progress across key stage 2. A more consistent approach to teaching has been implemented across all classes. Middle

leaders now need to check that the quality of this approach is having the right impact on improving pupils' skills across all subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils at key stage 2, including those who are disadvantaged, make consistently good progress from their starting points
- the focus on improving writing continues so that pupils make sustained progress across key stage 2
- middle leaders are given further support to check on the impact of newly introduced initiatives.

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 Kingston upon Thames. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher to evaluate the school's self-evaluation. I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I spoke to you and your deputy about your roles as designated safeguarding leads. I observed pupils as they left at the end of the school day and when they socialised at break and lunchtimes. I spoke to a number of pupils throughout the day about the school's safeguarding arrangements and their experiences at school. I spoke to staff and parents as they collected their children. I visited lessons with you and your deputy to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. I scrutinised a range of documents provided by school leaders, including attendance and 2018 outcomes information. I considered the school's record-keeping of pupils who have left the school. I spoke to groups of pupils about their work and, together, we scrutinised Year 6 pupils' work.