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Mrs Nuala Oster
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Oster

Short inspection of St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have established a strong team of senior leaders with clear roles and responsibilities. You acted swiftly and successfully to address the areas for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection. For example, you have improved the quality of teaching further and dramatically improved the outside area in Reception. The school provides a calm, friendly and well-ordered environment where pupils make good progress in their learning.

St Paul's has a strong community spirit. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They work hard, behave well and listen to their teachers. Pupils respond to teachers' advice and this helps them to improve their work. Senior leaders work hard to make sure that pupils attend regularly. You promote and celebrate good attendance well.

You have the full support of your staff, who are proud to be associated with the school. You have concentrated successfully on improving the quality of teaching. For example, you have worked closely with other schools and the local authority to ensure that teachers are fully aware of the standards pupils in Years 1 and 2 must reach in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, teachers have high expectations of pupils and evaluate their work accurately.

Teachers and teaching assistants appreciate the training and support they receive, resulting in consistent and effective teaching that enables pupils to make strong progress in their learning. Pupils in key stage 2 make good progress.

Key stage 2 pupils make good progress in mathematics and reading. However, you know your school's strengths and have accurately identified the areas that could be even better. For example, you would like the pupils to further increase the accuracy and precision of their mathematical recordings. You are also working with staff to enhance pupils' comprehension skills and vocabulary.

St Paul's benefits from an active and suitably trained governing body. Governors share your ambitions for the school and are well informed about its performance. They check for themselves how effective the school is, for example to make sure pupils understand the meaning and importance of visitors' lanyards. They are closely involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the school, and provide you with the necessary challenge.

Safeguarding is effective.

You make the safety and welfare of the pupils in your care your top priority. Staff know pupils well and show great care for them. They are very well aware of the need to look out for and report any safeguarding concerns immediately.

All adults are appropriately trained in keeping pupils safe. They know the rigorous procedures they must follow if they have any concerns. You make sure that records relating to safeguarding issues are fully maintained and stored securely. Governors are well aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and regularly check that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose.

Pupils told me that they feel safe and secure at school and that they have a teacher that they can turn to if they are worried about anything. They stated that pupils get along with each other well and that they have confidence in their teachers to sort out any disputes quickly and fairly. All of the parents I spoke to as they dropped off their children in the morning agreed that their children were safe, settled in well and were very happy. The majority of parents who responded to the online free-text survey agreed. However, a small minority expressed concern over the school's approach to bullying. I found that the few incidents of misbehaviour at St Paul's were well recorded and dealt with effectively.

Inspection findings

- Pupils in all years take pride in their work. They present their written work in English neatly and respond positively to teachers' comments for improvement. Pupils' books in key stage 1, and school information about their performance, show that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making consistently strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Your focus on improving pupils' comprehension skills is addressing this issue effectively. Your information about pupils' progress, confirmed by the quality of work in their books, shows that pupils throughout the school are making similarly good progress in reading as in writing and mathematics. However, you recognise that the most able pupils could be challenged further in their reading comprehension work.
- Teachers have been thoroughly trained and are well supported to teach mathematics effectively. In 2017, by the time they reached the end of key stage 2, pupils had made above-average progress in mathematics, and a larger-than-average proportion had attained a greater depth of understanding in the subject. This high achievement has been maintained for two years. Current pupils across the school, including disadvantaged pupils, are continuing to make strong progress in mathematics. Pupils' mathematics books show that they have good opportunities to tackle problems and to explain and justify their answers. Pupils complete exercises fully and check answers that need to be corrected. Work is appropriately demanding and misconceptions and miscalculations are tackled effectively. However, there were several examples of poorly executed mathematical diagrams, which reduced their accuracy.
- Overall attendance rates for pupils have been maintained at above the national average in recent years, although the attendance rates for the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are below average. You showed me the most recent information for pupils' attendance. This shows that most pupils attend regularly and that the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are significantly improving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are as accurate and precise as they can be when recording work in their mathematics books
- reading comprehension tasks for the most able pupils are suitably challenging to enable them to make even more rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

James McVeigh
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with the headteacher, other school leaders, administration staff, the chair of the governing body and one other governor. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. I spoke briefly with several parents as they arrived at school. I visited most classrooms with you to see how pupils engaged in their learning and to look in their books. Together with senior leaders, I looked at pupils' written work and the school's information about pupils' performance.

I examined school documents, including records about safeguarding, behaviour, self-evaluation, attendance and governors' meetings. I spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes, and met with a small group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. I considered 53 responses from parents to the online survey, Parent View, including 34 written comments and a parent's telephone call to Ofsted, 22 responses to the staff survey, and 174 to the pupil survey.