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Mr David Sidaway
Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy
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Dear Mr Sidaway

Short inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 11 May 2017, 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 2013.

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 been in post since 2014 and are leading the school with sheer determination to improve outcomes for pupils. Your open and honest approach to self-evaluation has been vital in clearly identifying the areas which need further development. You are well aware of the most pressing priorities and can clearly evidence the impact of the actions taken since your appointment. Your strong leadership, combined with the effective support of your deputy headteacher and wider team of school leaders, is creating an even greater capacity to improve.

Following an almost brand-new teaching team over the last few years, a more stable staff team has now been secured. You have eradicated any weaker teaching which existed and are now taking effective action to develop consistency in the quality of teaching throughout the school. This is particularly important given the proportion of new staff. Action taken to develop a wider leadership team responsible for assessment, mathematics and English has been successful. Your team of leaders has been instrumental in introducing and developing more robust systems. You are aware that these new systems, for example for assessment, now need to become more established. This will enable leaders to secure greater consistency in outcomes for pupils throughout the school.

You are ambitious in the targets you set for yourself and others. This was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection and has been addressed very effectively. For example, the success criteria in the school development plan are now more precise and measurable. There is also a strong link to teachers' performance management objectives so that everyone is now more accountable for pupils' achievement. This is helping staff work together with the same collective goals.

Pupils made very good progress by the end of key stage 2 in 2016. Progress in reading and mathematics was significantly above the national average. This positive progress also resulted in the proportion of pupils who met and exceeded the expected standards being well above national figures. The picture was similar by the end of key stage 1. Pupils' attainment was above national figures at both the expected standard and at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are not complacent about this achievement and recognise that there are some differences in attainment and progress for some current pupils. For example, the proportion of boys who met the early learning goals at the end of Reception in reading, writing and number was below the national average for the last two years. You have rightly prioritised achievement in early years as an area for further development.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You work closely with other professionals and services to ensure that children and families receive timely and effective support. The training staff receive means that they are effective in recognising and responding to signs of concern.

Pupils say that they feel safe and appreciate having a named person who they can talk to if they have any worries. They do not feel that bullying is an issue. The vast majority of parents feel that staff respond well to any concerns they raise and take appropriate action to resolve matters. The curriculum is effectively supporting pupils to develop tolerance and respect. Therefore, pupils talk with conviction about how important it is to treat people equally.

Inspection findings

- You have been keen to learn from the good practice which exists within the multi-academy trust. For example, you and other leaders have carried out teaching and learning reviews with leaders from other schools. This outward-looking approach has enabled leaders to gain a realistic evaluation of the effectiveness of school improvement work. It is also developing leaders' confidence and their ability to support other schools. Your leaders carry out a range of monitoring activities. This is helping them to effectively check the impact of their actions and to provide regular feedback to teachers. The challenge and support provided by the governors and school improvement

partner are adding even greater rigour. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve. The new systems which leaders have developed are starting to become more established and this is creating even greater capacity for further improvement. By empowering new staff and sharing responsibility for leadership, your new teachers and leaders are developing well. There is a strong team ethos where staff are relishing the support and development opportunities they are being given. You acknowledge that middle leadership would benefit from further development so that the team is able to make an enhanced contribution to school improvement.

- A new assessment system has evolved over time. Leaders have continually revised it and, therefore, it now provides increasingly reliable and accurate information. The assessment leader and class teachers have in-depth discussions about pupils' performance. Consequently, teachers now have a much greater understanding of the curriculum requirements and how to challenge the most able pupils to exceed the expectations. Through this process, teachers have also gained greater clarity about each child's learning needs and next steps. This is helping teachers to provide the precise targeted support to enable pupils to make good progress. In addition, the system ensures that teachers are sharply focused on the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's assessment information, along with work seen in books, shows that pupils are making good progress. Leaders are aware of where minor inconsistencies exist in pupils' attainment and progress. You know that establishing the assessment system further will enable even greater consistency in pupils' outcomes.
- You identified provision in the early years as an improvement priority and recognised that outcomes could be even better. For example, the achievement of boys in the last two years has been below the national average for reading, writing and number. You have taken decisive action to move the deputy headteacher into this class since January of this year. Already it is clear to see the improvements she has made. She has a very firm understanding of the children's strengths and weaknesses. This is resulting in staff adapting the learning experiences to enable children to make more rapid progress. For example, staff now plan learning opportunities in response to the children's interests. The deputy headteacher visited an outstanding school within the multi-academy trust, which has resulted in a number of improvements and quickening progress for children. Some of the approaches introduced have been particularly effective in developing the early reading and writing skills of disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language. Children's progress in phonics is improving quickly because of the high expectations now in place and the way children receive targeted teaching to meet their specific needs. You know that the next step is to increase the proportion of children who exceed the early learning goals by the end of Reception so that they have an even better start to key stage 1.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium funding have performed very well over time. In 2016, this continued, with attainment for this group in early years, phonics and at key stage 2 being in line with or above that of other pupils nationally. Overall, this group of pupils make

very strong progress during their time at school. In a very small number of cases, the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is not diminishing as quickly. However, the assessment and tracking systems you have in place are now more quickly identifying any discrepancies. Work in books shows that these pupils are starting to make more rapid progress to catch up with other pupils nationally.

- Attendance overall is above the national average. However, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and is in the bottom 10% nationally for persistent absence. A small proportion of pupils are regularly absent. Leaders' actions are only making limited improvements in these cases and the impact of the strategies used could be monitored more effectively, for example by checking more thoroughly that the range of strategies being used are effective for individual pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leadership is developed further in order to embed the new assessment and monitoring strategies so that pupils' outcomes are consistently good throughout the school
- an increased proportion of children, especially boys, meet and exceed the early learning goals by the end of Reception
- attendance for pupils who are regularly absent is improved by rigorously checking the impact of the strategies adopted.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the assessment leader, subject leaders, a representative from the local authority, directors of the school and seven members of the governing body. I evaluated documentation including the school's self-evaluation, the development plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records and information about safeguarding. I spoke with several parents and a group of pupils from a range of

year groups. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning and scrutinised pupils' work in books.