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Mrs Amanda Greaves
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Greaves

Short inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. School leaders have high aspirations for all pupils, a view that is shared by all staff and governors and the overwhelming majority of parents. Teaching across the school is consistently good and it is regularly monitored by you. You have a good understanding of the school's strengths and recognise the areas that are in need of further improvement.

Governors are committed to the school and are passionate about their role in bringing about school improvement. Governors have accessed training to improve the effectiveness of their roles. This has included, for example, training to improve their understanding of how to interpret data about pupils' performance in order to hold leaders to account closely. As headteacher, you have developed a very well-defined management structure, with everyone clear about their roles and responsibilities. Middle leaders understand what they need to do to bring about further improvement. For example, all phase leaders have had a responsibility to include in their action plans an aspect of development linked to improving parental engagement. Staff feel valued. They appreciate the opportunities they have to develop their professional practice and consider their contributions to school improvement are recognised and worthy. One staff comment stated, 'There is a famous African proverb which states that "it takes a village to raise a child". St Mary's epitomises that approach. As a new member of staff, that was the first thing that was apparent to me. It is that collective and altruistic responsibility that I love most about working for this school.'

You promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have opportunities to explore other cultures and religions, and to participate in a variety of experiences. During the course of the inspection, school 'digi-leaders' were leading assemblies on internet safety and the early years children were out visiting the seaside. Pupils report that they enjoy the clubs on offer, but wished that there were more opportunities available to them to learn how to play a musical instrument.

Pupils enjoy school and speak very positively about it. One pupil commented, 'Everyone looks forward to coming to school because there is a good atmosphere.' They are happy, confident and caring individuals who are keen to behave and work well. Pupils report that they enjoy lessons and recognise their teachers have high expectations of them. They say they are supported well and provided with sufficient challenge and that the school's 'growth mind-set' work has helped them to develop their skills of perseverance and to maintain positive attitudes to learning when tasks appear difficult. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are strong. They find it easy to ask for help and consider their teachers to be approachable and helpful. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are friendly, polite and very respectful both to adults in school and to each other.

Leaders have taken action to improve all of the areas identified at the last inspection. Mathematics teaching has been strengthened by introducing a new 'target/tray' system across key stage 2, which allows for teachers to quickly assess pupils' achievement in lessons and to move pupils to the correct level of challenge. Leaders have also ensured that the school's marking policy is adhered to rigorously, including in mathematics. Pupils respond to teachers' marking, correcting mistakes and tackling further challenges given. Leaders have spent time improving governors' skills, particularly in terms of their understanding of and ability to analyse pupils' performance data.

The last inspection identified forming a closer partnership with parents as an area for further improvement. The school has done much to improve this area. A 'Parents as Partners' forum has been established, enabling parent representatives from each class to have a voice and to help steer certain school developments. This has led to, for instance, mathematics and grammar workshops, and an 'open door' policy where parents are encouraged to enter the class with their children in the morning and to tackle the 'morning challenge' together. Focused coffee mornings each half term have also had a positive impact. For example, a recent coffee morning, focusing on special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), has led to the formation of a parents' SEND network for sharing matters of common interest.

A text messaging system is used to send reminders to parents, in addition to regular newsletters. The school's website contains an extensive amount of information for parents and has the facility for being presented in different languages.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding processes are effective. Systems are robust and fit for purpose and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of all pupils. Records are appropriately detailed and well maintained. Staff have received up-to-date training and are aware of current risks to young people. Governors have received training to fulfil their 'Prevent' duty and there is a nominated governor who has responsibility for monitoring the single central record. Pupils report that they feel safe in school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders are aware that the attendance of groups of pupils is not as good as it should be. Strategies have been put in place to try to rectify this. These have included careful monitoring of different groups of learners' attendance and targeting additional support and challenge for those individuals who have the weakest attendance.
- Weekly afternoon teas have been organised by the school's pastoral care worker to promote and celebrate good attendance for these individuals. As individuals' attendance has improved to that of the national average, they have left the support group and been replaced by the next group of poorer attenders.
- Regular communication with the relevant families, including letters and arranged meetings with you, the educational welfare officer and the pastoral support worker, has led to some improvements. For example, the learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have improved their attendance this year, and reduced their rate of persistent absence.
- However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still poor and persistent absence for this group is still very high. The school acknowledges this and accepts that there is much more work to be done to improve this group's attendance.
- Another focus of the inspection was to look at the provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and at how the pupil premium funding is used to support these pupils. Leaders track the progress of all learners, including this vulnerable group, well. Spending on these pupils is carefully monitored and support work is tailored to individual needs and monitored closely to measure impact. Adaptations or different intervention strategies are introduced if monitoring indicates that these interventions are not having the desired impact.
- Disadvantaged pupils are heard to read a minimum of three times a week and the weakest readers in this group are heard every day.
- Pupils' performance data for this group of learners is now included as a discrete section on the pupils' progress proformas used by the school. Curriculum subject leaders, phase leaders and governors are all tasked with analysing data for this group and ensuring that provision and outcomes are good. Governors have used their recent training to good effect and feel confident in their understanding of the data and their ability to offer challenge and to ensure leaders' accountability.

- Additional small-group and one-to-one support has been provided to this group of learners by adjusting timetables to enable class teachers to undertake longer focused support sessions with these pupils. There has also been a focus by teachers on fostering these pupils' independence skills. The 'target/tray' system used in mathematics teaching has been particularly effective in improving this.
- Leaders have also addressed this group's emotional health needs and taken action to reduce pupils' anxieties at stressful times of the year, such as during the Year 6 national curriculum tests. Tests now take place in classrooms, rather than the school hall, and adults who have provided one-to-one support are at hand to offer emotional support and reassurance. You report that this has led to improved pupil confidence and test performances this year.
- Evidence both in pupils' books and during classroom visits indicate that disadvantaged pupils are making satisfactory progress, but the school rightly acknowledges that not enough of these pupils are working at greater depth in mathematics and reading and writing at the end of key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attendance improves to be in line with the national average and persistent absence, particularly for the disadvantaged pupils, decreases to at least equal the national average
- the progress of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, is accelerated so that a greater proportion are working at greater depth in all subject areas by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

John Savage
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher and other staff. I also had a meeting with three members of the governing body, including the chair. I visited classrooms, accompanied by the headteacher.

I examined samples of pupils' work and teachers' assessments, and the school's approach to feedback relating to that work. I spoke with pupils, both informally during the day and more formally during a pre-arranged discussion. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school at the start of the day, at breaktime, lunchtime

and in lessons. I met with parents at the beginning of the school day and I took account of 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 33 free-text responses from parents. I also took account of 21 staff responses to an online survey.

I examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, the single central record and other safeguarding records, behaviour logs and policies, records of meetings of the governing body, information relating to pupils' attendance and the latest information on pupils' progress and attainment.

I also looked at information published on the school website.