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Mrs Helen Brown
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Nursery and Primary School
Cecil Road
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Dear Mrs Brown

Short inspection of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Nursery and Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 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 your predecessor 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. At the heart of this school is an intense shared commitment to inclusion and equality. You have developed a staff team that totally subscribes to your vision and will go 'the extra mile' for pupils in its care. Pupils speak with great pride about their school. Typically, parents comment that their children 'thrive' in this friendly and happy school. Many parents comment on the 'fantastic support' they themselves receive. The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend this school to other parents.

You have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need improvement. It is to your credit that when you had concerns about school improvement you sought advice and responded readily. The local area adviser from the Plymouth Catholic and Anglican Schools Trust (CAST) has worked with the local authority, which has brokered support from Torbay Teaching School Alliance. You have responded swiftly to this support. Specialist leaders have provided valuable advice. As a result, you have developed a strong team of middle leaders. Together, you have quickly embedded policy into practice. Consequently, pupils are receiving a consistently good quality of education.

Members of the local governing body are clear about their roles and benefit from constructive relationships with the staff team and the directors of the trust. This promotes transparency, openness and objectivity. As a result, governors have a

clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They confidently challenge and hold leaders to account to bring about improvements. The trust's area adviser knows the school well and has been effective in providing governors with training in areas such as safeguarding.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff have nurtured a culture where pupils and their families feel able to share any concerns or anxieties they may have. Pupils enjoy strong, trusting relationships with staff. They particularly value 'The Lodge', a calm and tranquil area by the award-winning garden where pupils receive additional support. When asked about bullying, pupils readily explained that there is very little bullying in school because 'we all care about each other and try to understand others' point of views'. You can demonstrate how swift action by the school has helped to overcome concerns promptly and prevent any risks from escalating. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

This is a caring school. You encourage wider family involvement. Parents' contribution to school life is greatly valued. Teachers help pupils to understand the risks of unsafe behaviour. Consequently, pupils are knowledgeable about e-safety. In addition, your early years team has been proactive in responding to local needs. Staff have supported families in establishing routines for teeth cleaning and enhanced their understanding of stranger danger.

Although overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average, too many pupils are persistently absent. You recognised that poor attendance was impeding pupils' progress. As with other aspects of the school's work, governors have provided challenge and your leadership team has worked tirelessly to tackle this. Leaders engaged the support of an attendance officer and a family support worker who is working well with parents to help them understand the importance of their children attending school regularly. As a result, rates of attendance for pupils persistently absent from school have improved. However, there is still work to be done in developing a culture of good attendance.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on mathematics. Following disappointing results in mathematics in last year's key stage 1 and 2 national tests, you wasted no time in analysing and tackling the reasons for this underachievement. The comprehensive actions you have taken have led to rapid improvement in pupils' ability to think more deeply to apply reasoning skills when solving problems in mathematics. Representatives from the teaching school alliance have worked with you to improve leadership of mathematics. Very specific staff training and leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have been fruitful. We visited a number of mathematics lessons and I scrutinised a number of pupils' work. It is clear there have been marked improvements in a relatively short space of time.

- In working with staff from other schools, you and your mathematics leader have improved teachers' confidence. Their subject knowledge of mathematics is strong. Consequently, a greater proportion of pupils are now on track to achieve at least expected standards this summer. This represents good progress from their different starting points. Teachers' ability to identify pupils' misconceptions, provide prompt and targeted feedback and adapt their teaching is particularly striking. However, the impact is most marked for the less able and most able pupils. Fewer of the middle-ability pupils are making rapid progress.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of support for pupils who leave the early years still struggling with their learning. In 2016, key stage 1 assessment results showed that not all children who left the early years without achieving a good level of development caught up. These pupils are receiving the support they need and are mostly on track to achieve the expected standard for their age by the end of Year 3. Outcomes for the current Year 2 pupils are looking much healthier. Predictions and work in books indicate that a greater proportion than nationally are on track to achieve the expected standard in 2017 across reading, writing and mathematics. Early identification, good teaching and well-placed interventions are helping pupils to get the support they need earlier.
- Thirdly, I looked at how leaders are using pupil premium funding to diminish the differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. In the past, both low and high prior-attaining disadvantaged pupils have not made sufficient progress in mathematics. Your pupil premium report clearly identified the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face and pinpointed strategies to help them overcome obstacles to their learning. Governors have a good understanding of what went well despite the document's limitations in evaluating the impact on pupils' outcomes.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's assessment information show that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. Higher proportions than previously are on track to achieve the high standards. This is primarily because of two things. First, improvements in your tracking of assessment information have allowed you to challenge and support teachers in better meeting the needs of these pupils. Second, focused programmes are eradicating gaps in pupils' knowledge and boosting their confidence.
- My final line of enquiry focused on the most able pupils and their progress, particularly the most able readers. In 2016, the pupils who achieved high standards in Year 3 did not sustain them and left Year 6 achieving only expected levels. High-achieving readers did not make the same rate of progress as others. Current outcomes show that this is not the case for current pupils. Leaders identified that one of the barriers to high standards in reading was that pupils did not read fast enough or have a good enough understanding of what they were reading to answer the questions. Another was pupils' depth of understanding.
- The school has raised the profile of reading and embraced a fresh approach to the teaching of reading. Undertaking weekly reading journals has developed pupils' stamina for reading and improved their comprehension skills. Pupils speak positively about their 'genre chart' and reading targets. They say that these inspire them to challenge themselves. You and your team have regular meetings

to discuss pupils' progress and set targets with teachers. Your approach, 'know the child, grow the child', is having a positive impact. Most-able pupils are making good progress. However, inspection activities have highlighted that few middle-ability pupils go on to achieve a high standard, especially in their reading and mathematics. You recognise that there is more work to do in this aspect of the school's work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching supports a greater proportion of middle-ability pupils to achieve a high standard in reading and mathematics
- further action is taken to ensure that the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school is reduced.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, and several middle leaders. I also spoke to pupils, representatives of the governing body, the Plymouth CAST area adviser and two representatives from the Torbay Teaching School Alliance. I also had a telephone conversation with your school development partner.

Your middle leader with responsibility for English took me on a learning walk around the school. Your leader of mathematics accompanied me on visits to mathematics lessons in Years 1, 2 and 5.

I considered a range of documentary evidence including the school's self-evaluation, current progress and attainment information, headteacher and governor visit reports and attendance information. I also considered staff safeguarding referrals, information about the suitability of staff to work with children and child protection records.

In addition, I took account of 29 parental responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 32 responses to the staff questionnaire. I also looked at responses to the school's own pupil questionnaire.