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Mrs Mary Claffey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Claffey

Short inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 2019, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your calm, compassionate and considered leadership has helped ensure that pupils, parents and carers have barely felt any effect of a considerable turnover of teaching staff since the last inspection. Your leadership, and the quality of education offered to pupils, has understandably earned the confidence and praise of the overwhelming majority of parents.

Pupils enjoy school. The school's values and ethos are deeply embedded. Pupils rise ably to the high expectations of their social and moral conduct. Their confident, courteous and friendly behaviour lends the school a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils are self-assured but respectful. As one parent summed up the views of many: 'This school is helping to shape my children into confident, articulate, polite and kind individuals who aren't afraid to ask questions if they do not understand something.' As well as getting along very well together, pupils benefit from strong, sensitive and caring relationships with adults. The school's motto of 'treat other people as you would like to be treated' filters relentlessly through its daily life. As another parent put it: 'My children are happy and proud to be part of the big family which is St Peter's.'

By the time they reach the end of their primary years, pupils' levels of attainment in English and mathematics give them a secure foundation for their secondary education. Following a previous dip, pupils' combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has shown a strongly improving trend in recent years. Another success story has been the significantly improving results in

the Year 1 phonics screening check. Phonics has a high profile in early years and key stage 1 classrooms, both in the environment, and through adults' reinforcement of pupils' learning.

The previous inspection recommended that leaders further improved the good quality of teaching. Leaders and staff have worked successfully together to maintain effective teaching as personnel have changed. The headteacher is accurate in her diagnosis of what is going well and what could be improved. Teachers are positive about the direction of travel. They like the open culture where they can learn from each other within, and often beyond, the school. Current initiatives in reading, writing and mathematics are testament to this ongoing desire to improve. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's effectiveness. They convey an ambition to support and challenge the school's improvement.

Inspectors also asked leaders to raise the achievement of the most able pupils. The nature of the school's population has altered notably since the previous inspection. Specifically, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has grown dramatically. This group achieves well. The impressive and memorable autism awareness assembly, coincidentally taking place on the day of the inspection, admirably exemplified the school's highly inclusive ethos. There are also signs that the proportion of most-able pupils working at the higher standards (sometimes known as 'greater depth') is growing, but this remains an important priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The culture of safeguarding and care is very strong. This culture is one of open communication, where staff are suitably trained and feel able to share any concerns, no matter how minor. They are rightly confident that these worries will be acted on appropriately. Leaders promptly and appropriately share the more significant concerns with other agencies. Record-keeping is sound. The large number of parents that responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed unanimously that their children feel safe at school. As one parent perceptively observed: 'They all take the time to get to know each child, which makes the children feel school is a safe environment to learn and grow.'

Leaders are very aware of the possible links between safeguarding and pupils' absence. In the majority of year groups, attendance has notably improved this year. Overall rates are broadly similar to the national average. However, despite the school's efforts, some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, still miss too much school. Persistent absence rates have fallen markedly for this group, but there is still more to do to bring them in line with national averages for similar pupils. Leaders are on the case.

Inspection findings

- Teachers are mindful of the needs of the most able pupils when planning lessons. Sometimes, teachers are successful at setting up tasks in a way that will enable most-able pupils to really demonstrate their capabilities. Broadly similar proportions as seen nationally reach the higher standards in all of reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, the quality of pupils' work, including that of the most able, is variable across the curriculum. At the end of key stage 1, the proportions of most-able pupils achieving greater depth compare less favourably with national averages.
- Under the attentive and passionate advocacy of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), pupils with SEND thrive. The percentage of pupils with SEND on roll now places the school in the top 20% of mainstream schools nationally for this rate. Staff are vigilant in identifying special educational needs early. They have the correct intention to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met and that potential barriers to future success and achievement are overcome. Because of the quality of teaching, assessment and support that pupils with SEND receive, they typically make the same strong progress as their peers, and sometimes better. Not only do pupils with SEND do well academically, but their development is also strongly promoted socially, emotionally and physically.
- The proportion of pupils with higher levels of need, including those who have education, health and care plans, has also grown significantly. Careful assessment, informed by close links with parents and other professionals, helps secure a deep understanding of pupils' particular difficulties. Targeted use of this information results in these pupils receiving the effective provision that they deserve. Leaders and governors have suitably prioritised staff training, for example investing in dedicated time for the SENCo to work with, train and coach teachers and teaching assistants. Not surprisingly, parents of children with SEND are effusive in their praise of the provision.
- Leaders and staff know that pupils could make better progress in writing to achieve higher standards. Leaders have been proactive in finding ways to improve the quality of writing, and have made a good start. Pupils' writing skills clearly improve year-on-year right across the school. During the inspection, Year 3 pupils were enthused by their teacher's various challenges. For example, they had begun to compose some lively and persuasive letters about chocolate. Similarly, motivating writing opportunities in early years, for example making wishes to celebrate Chinese New Year, encourage younger children to have a go. However, expectations of what younger children and pupils are capable of in writing are not high enough to encourage stronger progress. In younger year groups, pupils do not master technical aspects such as handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar quickly enough to develop greater fluency earlier. Fewer pupils achieve greater depth in writing across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- expectations of what younger children and pupils can achieve in writing are raised so that they make stronger progress
- the most able pupils are enabled to excel across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Before visiting the school, I reviewed the school's website and information about the school's performance over time. On site, I sampled a range of documents and records about the school's work, including scrutinising arrangements to safeguard pupils. Accompanied by you, I visited all classes. While in class, I observed the teaching and learning that was taking place and spoke with pupils about their learning. I also reviewed a wide range of work from across the current academic year in pupils' books. I met leaders, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. In addition, I carefully considered the views of the 94 parents who responded to Parent View and the 18 staff who completed a confidential survey. I spoke with pupils on the playground at lunchtime about their views and experiences of school. At the start of the day, I spoke informally with parents as they brought their children to school and I attended whole-school assembly.