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Mr Paul Beverton
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Dear Mr Beverton

Short inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes RC School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders work effectively together and have created a positive culture that supports all members of staff in doing their very best for the pupils in the school. You, together with your staff and governors, have created a strong team that always puts the needs of pupils first. You work tirelessly to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for and achieve well. The school motto of 'Live, Love, Learn' is understood and lived up to by staff and pupils. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about their school. One parent summed up the views of many when they said: 'The teachers are so committed. I feel that all members of the school really care for my child and his development.'

You and your team have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths because you evaluate the impact of actions carefully. Your plans for continued improvements identify clearly how the school's goals will be achieved. Governors contribute effectively to the process of school improvement because they are well informed and ask challenging questions. They are outward looking and grasp opportunities to add to their skills and knowledge so they can continue to support the school. Governors understand that their role is to provide challenge to the school, but they also take a keen interest in staff well-being and actively seek ways to reduce excessive workloads on all staff.

Pupils enjoy school and they behave well. In lessons pupils concentrate appropriately on the tasks that they are set and they work well together. Pupils are

keen to support each other. They respect individual differences as a result of the values the school teaches them. You ensure that pupils' views and opinions inform key decisions about the running of the school. You systematically seek out the views and opinions of pupils, including on how they learn best and what they want to learn. An example of this is in the recent development of the outdoor classroom. You have involved the pupil 'Eco Council' in making key decisions about the design of the area. Pupils feel respected, valued and listened to as a result of this approach to include them in the life of the school.

The previous inspection report recommended that leaders improved the quality of teaching so that pupils made more progress in writing. Leaders were asked to do this by providing teachers with opportunities to share good practice and learn from each other. You rightly judge the quality of teaching as good and there are some examples of very strong teaching. However, there are occasions when teachers' explanations lack clarity. At these times pupils' misconceptions are not fully addressed.

Your improvement plans provide a clear focus on continuing to ensure that the best practice in the school is shared and that teachers continue to learn from each other. Pupils make good progress in writing because of the steps you have taken to improve the approach to the teaching of writing. Where learning is best, teachers have fully embraced the changes that you have introduced. This includes providing pupils with resources that allow them to work independently and apply what they have been taught in lessons. In some classes this support could be improved further. You rightly acknowledge that further work is required to ensure that the school approach to teaching handwriting is followed consistently by all staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding that lies at the heart of all it does. Staff receive effective training in child protection and safeguarding. This helps them understand their responsibilities to be vigilant about pupils' safety. Leaders maintain comprehensive records of any concerns that are raised and work well with external partners to ensure that pupils are safe. Governors provide effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures and also benefit from useful training which enables them to fulfil their responsibilities.

Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their understanding of how to stay safe because of the effective design of the curriculum. Every school term begins with lessons on 'education for personal relationships'. In these lessons pupils are taught important life skills that help them to develop into responsible citizens with a keen understanding of how to stay safe. One pupil described how they had been taught the 'five finger model' which helped them to identify five people they could talk to if they had a worry or a concern.

Leaders have ensured that pupils feel safe and are safe at all times by equipping pupils with the skills and opportunities they need to raise any concerns. These include every classroom having a 'worry monster' where pupils can share any worries they may have. Pupils know that the school works hard to keep them safe and they trust their teachers to help them resolve any problems that arise.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to look at specific areas of the school's work including: how effective leaders have been in improving the quality of teaching; whether pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in writing in key stage 2; and the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have created a strong culture in the school of staff wanting to continually improve their skills as teachers. You carefully evaluate the quality of teaching and provide teachers with useful feedback and support to help them build on strengths and tackle areas for development. This cycle of continuous improvement means that teaching is good, with some very strong practice. Leaders recognise that helping teachers to always provide clear explanations in lessons will help pupils to make even more progress.
- Teachers benefit from a wide range of training opportunities both within school and through visits to other schools. Leaders ensure that teachers can observe strong practice and are supported to identify effective strategies that they can use in their own lessons. Training for teachers is based on their individual needs and reflects their level of experience. Newly qualified teachers benefit from significant support from senior teachers and leaders which helps them to quickly develop their own skills.
- Leaders have developed clear approaches for the teaching of English and mathematics in the school. For example, in English you expect teachers to evaluate pupils' writing at the beginning of a sequence of lessons and use this information to help plan subsequent learning. This consistency of approach helps pupils to make sustained progress as they move through key stage 2. Where teaching is strongest pupils are provided with resources that allow them to work independently and deepen their understanding of key concepts and ideas. This needs to be embedded across the school so that all pupils benefit from the best practice.
- Pupils make good progress in writing because they are provided with plenty of opportunities to observe teachers writing themselves. This effective modelling then helps pupils construct their own texts. Pupils are also provided with meaningful feedback that they are encouraged to act upon when editing their work. One pupil explained, 'My confidence is improving because editing helps me get better.'
- You use a range of approaches to ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. For example, teachers lead writing focus groups for disadvantaged pupils. In these lessons, pupils focus on specific skills that are holding them back in their writing and benefit from personalised

feedback on how to improve further. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as other pupils and in some cases their progress is even better.

- The curriculum is carefully designed to interest and motivate pupils as well as teach them the important skills and knowledge that they need. Learning is organised as 'topics' that include more than one subject. This cross-curricular approach means that time is used effectively, and pupils experience a broad curriculum throughout their time at school. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 began their 'Turrets and Tiaras' topic by finding clues from a princess who needed rescuing. They then visited a local castle to carry out the rescue before celebrating the outcome with a banquet and medieval dance. Throughout this topic pupils developed their historical and geographical understanding as well as practising their reading and writing skills.
- Pupils' work across the curriculum is often of a high standard. They take pride in what they produce and work hard in the time given. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to present their work in interesting ways that encourage creativity and motivate pupils. However, the handwriting policy is being reviewed and is not applied consistently. Consequently, pupils' presentation is not always as good as possible.
- You have enhanced the curriculum by considering pupils' emotional well-being and offering mindfulness lessons. All staff have been trained in this approach and it has impacted positively on pupils' ability to concentrate and learn effectively. One pupil explained, 'It lets you think about right now and just be yourself.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that the handwriting policy is implemented by all staff
 - ensuring that teachers' explanations are always clear and concise
 - providing all pupils with access to the resources that allow them to work independently.

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 Brighton and Hove. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Freeston
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, senior leaders and governors. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority. I visited lessons across the school, with a particular focus on key stage 2, to observe teaching, speak with pupils and look at their books. I spoke with pupils about their experiences of school. I met with a selection of teachers to discuss their roles and actions in school. I analysed 38 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and 17 responses to the staff survey. I examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, documentation relating to safeguarding and the pupil premium strategy.