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Ms Carmel Hughes
Headteacher
St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School
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Dear Ms Hughes

Short inspection of St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 October 2015, 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You wasted no time in acting on the recommendations of the previous report and have continued to improve the standard of education all pupils receive, especially those supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for those entitled to free school meals or looked after). Over time, you have sustained the capacity of the staff team by recruiting new members with fresh ideas and energy. Meanwhile you have enabled long-standing staff to continue developing their experience and leadership and to share their expertise.

Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils joining the school with English as an additional language has increased year-on-year. In some classes, this group now comprises more than half of the pupils, especially in the early years and Key Stage 1. Proudly reflecting the Christian ethos of the school, and led by your unflagging example, staff and governors have welcomed the wealth of cultures and languages this has brought into the school. At the time of my visit, pupils were enthusiastically sharing the traditions of their own and each other's heritages as part of the school's annual 'international week'. The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty, equality and freedom of speech. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Parents value very highly the way the school involves them in the education of their children, the quality of communication between home and school and the ready

availability of staff. This includes parents whose children have only recently joined the school and those whose children have special educational needs and/or are disabled.

You have continued to inspire a vision, shared by all staff, for the best outcomes for pupils whatever their background or starting point. Since the last inspection, this has meant an increasing focus on individual pupils' progress, particularly for those supported by the pupil premium. You and the staff know the individual needs of pupils well, so the right support and challenge is provided promptly. As a result, pupils make good progress through each phase of the school in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils behave well throughout the school day. They play happily together and take care of one another. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and take care of the resources they use. Regularly, through prayer and links with charities, pupils are enabled to help others less fortunate than themselves. Currently, this is through a focus on the plight of refugees.

You ensure staff consistently promote a chosen set of principles designed to develop pupils' 'love of learning'. These are creativity, curiosity, perseverance, concentration, independence and collaboration. Pupils respond well. They listen attentively to their teachers, work hard and take care with presentation. Pupils were able to tell me how this approach is helping them to learn well. Pupils enthusiastically undertake regular projects at home in connection with their topic work. Recently in Year 4, this involved creating detailed models of ancient temples.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recognised the many strengths of the school. These included the shared ambition of leaders, staff and governors, parents' confidence in the school, and strengths in the curriculum and aspects of teaching. Inspectors also identified a need for pupils to be more excited and interested by their studies, for pupils to have more opportunities to consolidate their learning, and for members of staff to share their expertise more influentially. Leaders have addressed all these effectively so that:

- pupils' learning has become enriched with plentiful opportunities for music and art, visits to places of interest and sporting activities. On the day of the inspection, groups of pupils were visiting the Imperial War Museum in London and the Glyndebourne opera house
- pupils have regular opportunities in other subjects to apply the skills they learn in mathematics and English lessons, and do so enthusiastically
- experienced teachers very effectively lead aspects such as English, mathematics, the early years and assessment, and special educational needs provision. Experienced teachers provide helpful mentoring support to newly qualified colleagues.

You, your leadership team and governors are not complacent, however. You have identified the correct priorities for further improvement and are taking the right action to address these. You know that more needs to be done urgently to ensure that all Year 1 pupils attain the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) check, and that work should continue to ensure that all older pupils learn to use English spelling, grammar and punctuation well. You are also aware that, despite your efforts over an extended period, parents of some pupils supported by the pupil premium still do not support their child's regular attendance at school well enough. Governors know the school well through their visits and the regular reports you provide. However, their role in evaluating how well aspects of the school are improving is not clear enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school is a very safe place where pupils are cared for well. Safeguarding procedures are well established and staff well trained. Governors conduct an annual audit which they discuss with the local authority for any advice which may be required. Local authority procedures for the recruitment of staff are followed assiduously, and governors involved in recruitment are appropriately trained. Pupils say that they do not experience bullying, but they are sure an adult would resolve any difficulties which did occur straight away. Pupils are well informed about the risks involved in using the internet and understand why the school has strict systems to limit the sites they can visit in school. Pupils are supervised well at breaktimes, so they play safely and happily together and everyone is included.

Inspection findings

- Pupils throughout the school are supported to learn well through an environment which is well organised, creative and stimulating. Thoughtfully presented classroom displays successfully support pupils' learning and celebrate their successes.
- Staff follow your example in the way they care for and attend to the needs of every child and family. This is valued highly by parents, including those whose children join the school before being able to speak English well. The caring ethos of the school is conspicuous, for example during breakfast club and when staff greet and dismiss their classes. You meet regularly with teachers to discuss individual pupils' progress.
- Staff and governors share a determined ambition for every pupil to succeed and move to the next stage of their education well prepared. Governors are well known in the school and ensure their membership properly reflects the school community. However, governors do not check systematically the impact leaders' actions have on pupils' outcomes (for example in phonics).
- Pupils make great progress during Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes pupils supported by the pupil premium. Your keen

focus on this group has ensured that their progress is regularly better than for other pupils nationally.

- Pupils also make good progress in Key Stage 1, so the proportion who achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is regularly above that found nationally. However, many pupils have low starting points, so that, although some reach the higher than expected levels, this proportion is lower than average. In Key Stage 1, the school has consistently reduced the gap between the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium and others, and this is now very small.
- In Year 1, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the national phonics check has remained below average for the last two years, declining in 2015. Although the proportion achieving the expected standard represents good progress for many from low starting points, you are right to identify improvement in this area as a key priority.
- Children enter Reception Year with levels of learning typically below those expected for their age. An increasing proportion enter the school unable to speak English well, or with special educational needs and/or who are disabled. A small proportion of pupils do enter the school with levels of learning typical for their age or above this. Children make very good progress during the Reception Year so that, by the time they move on to Year 1, the proportion attaining a good level of development is close to the national average. Teachers in the Reception Year identify more-able children promptly and provide appropriately for them, including before some are able to speak English well.
- You and the other leaders know well the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Staff share a commitment to improve rapidly pupils' outcomes in phonics and English spelling, grammar and punctuation. Relevant action is being taken and you are seeking external support.
- Teachers in Reception Year and Key Stage 1 work well together to develop their teaching of phonics. Teachers share valuable ideas and support one another in using new technology and resources designed to accelerate pupils' progress. A close watch is kept on the progress of individuals, and pupils learn well in small groups led by teaching assistants. Teachers swiftly identify and challenge the most able, including those for whom English is an additional language. Workshops about phonics are regularly provided for parents to help them to support their children effectively.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils who need to catch up in phonics receive effective extra tuition. English grammar is taught systematically and illustrated well for pupils in engaging classroom displays. Pupils are encouraged to write well across the curriculum through topics which excite them.
- Some boys who previously found writing a chore now write enthusiastically, for example when they contribute to class topic books. Some girls who previously found mathematics uninteresting now tackle challenging calculations and mathematical problems with alacrity, keen to find the answer and to share their work. Pupils generally are hugely enthusiastic about their learning and the creative opportunities the school provides.

- Teachers undertake leadership roles conscientiously and work together well. The early years leader works tirelessly to adapt provision in Reception class to meet children's specific needs. With the senior leadership team, the assessment leader has ably led staff in developing detailed assessment procedures for the revised National Curriculum. In Key Stage 1, teachers are working closely together to achieve accelerated progress for pupils in their phonics learning. The inclusion leader introduces swift intervention for pupils who may be falling behind and ensures this provision is adapted by teachers if necessary.
- Most pupils attend school regularly and are punctual. However, some parents of pupils supported by the pupil premium do not support their children's regular attendance well enough, despite the school's determined challenge and support.
- Pupils behave well and work hard; they are proud of their school and one another. Pupils take care to show respect to the school, staff and each other.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- where necessary, the attendance of pupils supported by the pupil premium improves rapidly, building on past work
- work to improve pupils' achievement in the Year 1 phonics check continues, so that this achievement matches or exceeds the national average
- the school's improvement plans show clearly how governors will check and measure the impact leaders' actions have on pupils' outcomes.

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher, when we considered your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I held discussions with the early years leader and inclusion leader. I met with a group of governors and spoke on the telephone with a representative of Brighton and Hove local authority. I talked with parents as they brought their children to school, considered 45 responses to the online survey Parent View and met with one parent at their request. With you or the deputy headteacher, I visited sections of five lessons. I looked at pupils' books, spoke with pupils during lessons and at playtime and observed their behaviour around the school. I spoke with staff around the school and analysed 12 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I examined information on the school's website and considered a range of other documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, safeguarding procedures, the school's improvement plans, and governors' records.