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Mrs Clare Scott  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Scott

### **Short inspection of St Vincent's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 November 2016, 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 May 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since you became the headteacher, you have been resolute in improving the quality of pupils' education. You have established a very strong culture that emphasises pupils' personal development as well as their academic achievement. As a result, you have consolidated, and built on, the school's performance.

You and your deputy's attention to detail has driven improvements to teaching and learning. This has ensured that teaching is strong and that pupils achieve well overall. Well-devised procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning mean that you have an accurate and robust knowledge of strengths and areas that need improving. You use this knowledge to provide teachers with effective support and training. The wide range of professional development opportunities, including visits to, and partnerships with, other schools have a positive impact on teaching quality. Similarly, support for teachers new to the profession has been most successful.

As a result of this support, teaching has a significant impact on pupils' achievements. For example, the teaching of mathematics has improved and pupils make at least expected progress by the end of Year 6. You recognise that a few weaknesses remain but your resolute determination to drive improvement is having a noticeable impact. Nearly all teaching is effective and some is high quality.

An especially strong characteristic of the school is the way you and your staff have established a positive culture that is underpinned effectively by its Catholic values. This culture encompasses everything you and your staff do, from your relationships with children and their parents to the way you promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It also ensures that pupils gain a strong understanding of British values. Many people, including nearly all the parents I spoke with, described the school as a family, which accurately defines the school's ethos and culture. St Vincent's is a close-knit school in which pupils' care, welfare, achievements and aspirations are at the top of its agenda.

You, senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of pupils' achievements because the procedures to measure their progress are effective. You use these procedures to identify those pupils who need extra support and to check that they are all on track to meet their targets. As a result, differences in the performance of disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing. While differences are still evident, you are taking well-defined action to ensure that these are tackled effectively.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors are diligent in ensuring that the appropriate checks are carried out on the suitability of staff. This includes support staff and volunteers. All staff and governors have received training, for example for the 'Prevent' duty, so that they know how to implement the school's child protection policy. Those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding have had up-to-date training on areas such as safer recruitment and carrying out the role of designated safeguarding lead.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they use the internet. This is because they are taught about keeping safe, for example about road safety and e-safety. Those pupils I spoke with were clear that they felt safe and well cared for at school. They know who to go to if they have a concern and include teachers, support staff and mid-day supervisors in their list of people they trust.

### **Inspection findings**

- Senior leaders are highly ambitious for the school and pupils' achievements. They have a very secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and use this successfully to drive improvement. As a result, the proportion of pupils' achieving expected, and better than expected, progress is increasing.
- Leaders monitor teaching, learning and assessment, and evaluate quality, robustly. A broad range of evidence is used to identify strengths and aspects of teaching that need improving. As a result, leaders have a firm grasp of teaching quality and use this information to support teachers with sound advice and to provide good opportunities for them to develop their professional skills. The impact of this work is clear and teaching is

nearly always effective across the school.

- Teachers plan learning carefully and set work that is suitably challenging for the different abilities in the class. As a result, the tasks given to pupils stretch their thinking, enabling them to deepen their learning. However, on occasions, the most able pupils are not challenged to go that bit further in their learning, especially in mathematics. Leaders are aware of this and are working to develop more emphasis on mathematical mastery.
- Leaders, including governors, keep a careful eye on the impact that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is having on their achievement. They have evaluated whether the funding has been used in the best way by looking at the effect that initiatives have had on helping pupils to reach their potential. Some programmes have been discarded while others have been adapted to make them more effective. As a result, disadvantaged pupils, including those who are the most able, are catching up with others in the school and nationally. While there remain some differences, the impact of the school's work is positive. However, leaders are not complacent and have successfully targeted support to where it is most needed.
- In key stage 2, pupils make progress which is at least similar to that expected for their age. In writing, progress is often better than this with a greater proportion reaching the higher standards. Achievement in reading is less good than in writing and leaders recognise that pupils could do better. Consequently, the school is developing a 'reading for pleasure' culture which is supported by training for staff, including help from the local authority. This is having a positive impact. For example, in a Year 5 lesson pupils were very keen to explain their views about the book they were reading as a class. They were confident and imaginative, sharing their ideas enthusiastically with others.
- In mathematics, pupils make good progress overall to achieve well. Although disadvantaged pupils do not attain quite as well, they make nearly the same progress as others nationally. This is because teachers use their subject knowledge to provide work that is interesting and, for the most part, challenging.
- Achievement in key stage 1 is also improving. Here, reading is strongest, the result of the work to make reading enjoyable and fun. In both writing and mathematics, pupils' performance is improving so that nearly all pupils reach the expected standard. The proportion reaching a greater depth in their learning is similar to the national average.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as others in the school and make good progress overall. This is because their achievements are tracked carefully by staff who use this information to provide well targeted support.
- Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school is first rate. Pupils are respectful, polite and well-mannered. Pupils have excellent attitudes to work and are extremely keen to do well in their lessons. Teaching is engaging and stimulating. Teachers have established strong classroom routines and their high expectations create a highly positive climate for

learning. Consequently, pupils not only behave impeccably, they also work hard to do their best.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on improving achievement, especially in reading at key stage 2 and mastery in mathematics
- the work to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is maintained so that teaching becomes consistently good or better.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Oppenheim  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspector agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- Confirm current achievement across the school and subjects. Consider especially, current progress in key stage 2, attainment in key stage 1, and the impact of the school's work to improve reading.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, boys, girls and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Identify initiatives to address issues and consider whether differences in attainment and progress are being addressed effectively.
- The quality of teaching, including in mathematics, and whether work is well matched to the needs of different groups in all lessons, and the impact of feedback on progress and learning.
- The impact of leadership and management on the quality of teaching. The extent to which leaders ensure that teaching quality is improving, especially in relation to the achievement of different groups.
- Safeguarding and the extent to which policies are implemented effectively. The extent to which there is a culture of safeguarding across the school.

The following activities were carried out during the inspection:

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the senior leadership team, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Parents were spoken to informally before school.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils to talk about their views of the school.
- A small group of pupils was heard reading.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and information about pupils' progress, the governing body and pupils' attendance. The school's single central record and safeguarding procedures were also checked.
- The inspector reviewed the school's website and confirmed that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.
- The inspector took account of 48 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- All classes were visited to see a range of subjects being taught, including English, mathematics and French.