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Mrs Rosalind Atkinson and Mrs Carol Molloy
Co-headteachers
St Francis RC Primary School
Friary Road
Peckham
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Dear Mrs Atkinson

Short inspection of St Francis RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have built a staff team that is highly skilled and addresses the needs of all pupils. The school's strong ethos, based on Christian values, is shared across your close-knit community. Governors have a thorough understanding of the school, and of the academic and social issues facing pupils.

Pupils are happy at the school. They enjoy their learning and take pride in their work. Pupils are motivated to do their best by adults who know them well. Healthy competition is used to increase pupils' academic stamina and resilience. Pupils were keen to tell me about their latest reading books, and how much they enjoy reading.

Using information on pupils to set them challenging targets is an area that you have addressed. This was identified for improvement at your last inspection. Your subject leaders work in collaboration with teachers, other schools and the local authority. They make sure that pupils' work is moderated so that information is accurate. You know which pupils have not met your high expectations and you use this information to help them improve.

Progress in reading has not been as strong as in other core subjects. Your reaction to the drop in reading standards at key stage 2 in 2016 has been swift. You have rightly raised the profile of reading, to the extent that recently the school won the World Book Day Award. Reading is an improving area, but leaders must make strenuous efforts to ensure that progress in reading at key stage 2 matches that in writing and mathematics.

The school has a robust school improvement plan. It includes strategies for improving progress and achievement in core subjects. The school's self-evaluation reflects pupils' attainment. To better inform all stakeholders, including governors, the school should also include progress measures in self-evaluation documents.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. The school works closely with outside agencies so that pupils and families receive the individualised support they need. Governors ensure that relevant policies are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the needs of the school.

Training of all staff, including the designated safeguarding leads, is timely and ensures that the school is continually assessing the safety of its pupils and staff. Leaders, through the school curriculum, make sure that pupils are well informed on how to stay safe. Pupils told me, 'We feel safe in school' and 'We tell our teacher if we have a problem.'

Inspection findings

- At our initial meeting we discussed the current priorities for the school, including the ones that you had identified. We agreed on a number of key lines of enquiry.
- The first line of enquiry was to examine pupils' progress in reading at the end of key stage 2. The 2016 outcomes highlighted this, and it was an identified priority for the school.
- The school has introduced and invested in a new guided reading programme. Pupils study selected texts that engage all types of learners through imaginative, insightful and reflective activities. Pupils enjoy the autonomy which their reading and writing journals allow. Parents and carers have been encouraged to support pupils' reading and writing. They are asked to read and write in their children's journals, allowing families to share in pupils' learning.
- Pupils are making progress with their reading. They read more at home, and their comprehension skills have improved. The programme is still relatively new, so evidence of sustained progress is yet to be seen.
- The second line of enquiry was based on underachievement in mathematics at key stage 1. This was chosen because recent mathematics outcomes in key stage 1 have been lower than in reading and writing.

- Middle leaders have been heavily involved in producing local authority shared curriculum plans for mathematics. They now have a working knowledge of the mathematics curriculum, which they use to support all staff in delivering good quality mathematics lessons.
- Teachers and leaders accurately assess pupils' work, and systems for tracking progress are strong. Termly reviews ensure that interventions and additional support are directed to those pupils who require it, and the extra help is having a positive impact. The regular analysis of pupils' skills has led to positive changes to the school curriculum. For example, the school altered the mathematics curriculum when mental strategies were identified as being less developed than formal written methods.
- The final line of enquiry was to examine the school's attendance and persistent absence rates. This was identified because persistent absence rates were higher than national averages.
- Attendance continues to be a strength of the school, and is consistently higher than the national average. Persistent absence rates are currently lower than national figures.
- Leaders track pupils' absence and persistent absence. They use this information to direct appropriate rewards and sanctions, which are ensuring the high attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress in reading improves so that it is consistent with that in writing and mathematics
- the school self-evaluation process addresses pupils' progress as well as their attainment
- achievement in mathematics at key stage 1 improves so that a greater proportion of pupils meet the expected standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Hughes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The following activities took place during the inspection:

- Meetings were held with senior leaders, the safeguarding team, a group of middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and a governor.
- Teaching was observed jointly across the school with senior leaders.
- Pupils from Years 3 and 6 were heard reading.
- A range of school documents were scrutinised, including policies and safeguarding records, the school's website and governors' minutes.
- A range of pupils' workbooks were reviewed.
- Discussions were held with pupils.
- The 15 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, were considered.
- The inspector had conversations with parents and pupils on the playground.