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Miss Robina Maher  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Masbro Road  
London  
W14 0LT

Dear Miss Maher

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

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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. You have worked closely with your senior leaders to ensure that the school is a welcoming, inclusive and happy place. Your focused leadership has ensured that all adults are fully supportive of your vision and staff morale is high. You have developed the role of middle leaders, which is securing improvements to teaching and pupils' outcomes. You have successfully met the recommendation from the previous inspection related to early years practice. You and your staff are well supported by a committed and reflective governing body.

Governors know the school well, and the chair of governors and those governors with a subject responsibility role visit the school regularly. You provide governors with detailed information that they use to offer strong support and challenge. They contribute effectively to the school community and are focused on school improvement and achieving the best outcomes for all pupils.

Parents praise the work of the school and value the ethos of inclusiveness. Pupils are very proud of their school. They said that they feel safe in school and that everyone gets on well together. They particularly value the way teachers help them improve their learning. One pupil, explaining what happens if he finds work difficult, said: 'If I struggle, the teacher will help me.' Another child, explaining how she knows how to improve her work, said: 'Through assessment I know my strengths and where I need to work even harder.'

You have developed more opportunities for pupils to learn about the wider curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to carry out science investigations, which they enjoy. Trips to

enhance learning have been carefully planned into the history and geography curriculum. One pupil said: 'The trip to the science museum was amazing. I didn't know all those things happened.' Another pupil spoke about how a trip to Kidzania helped him to manage and use money in a real-life situation. Pupils learn about life in modern Britain and elect members to the student council. They study world religions and learn about different cultures and faiths. Displays around the school encourage pupils to think about others. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that the written work in pupils' topic books is not of the same high standard as that in their English books.

The behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons is good. They are confident that children interact well with each other and adults. Pupils have a positive approach to their work. They listen carefully and answer questions confidently. They are very well mannered and courteous and treat each other respectfully. Pupils are very aware of children in their classes who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and ensure that they are fully included in their work and play.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. The headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead officer and has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements and records are of a high quality. Staff and governors receive annual training and regular updates about current safeguarding practice. All staff know how to recognise warning signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and how to report their concerns. Records are comprehensive and show swift action is taken should the need arise. The headteacher's knowledge of families and pupils ensures that pupils are safe and well supported.

Pupils' safety is of the highest importance to all members of the school community. Pupils report that they feel safe at school and parents agree that they are safe. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of issues such as e-safety. They know what to do should they have concerns about safety issues and said they knew staff in the school would listen and help them. Pupils said that there is very little bullying but they know what to do if their friends are bullied. They said that, although there are very few incidents of bullying in school, they feel confident that they could report it and the adults in school would deal with it swiftly and effectively. Parents agreed.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection we agreed on key lines of enquiry. The first key line of enquiry would focus on leaders' actions to improve standards in reading. In 2018, assessments show that Year 6 pupils made stronger progress in mathematics and writing than in reading over key stage 2. As a result, you and your leadership team are introducing changes to the teaching of reading. However, there has been insufficient time to review the effectiveness of these changes.
- You have reviewed the books used in the school so that pupils have a range of books to engage their interest, including popular fiction, newspapers and non-fiction books. Pupils said that they liked being able to borrow these books and take them home to read. The school also uses an electronic reading scheme. Pupils enjoy the range of e-books available to them, and there is an expectation that pupils answer questions

about what they have read. Teachers are able to monitor the progress of pupils and give feedback to them online.

- Guided reading sessions are taught every morning to support pupils' comprehension, develop their vocabulary and improve reading fluency. Pupils generally demonstrated enjoyment in reading. Those I heard read in their small groups did so with fluency, but some pupils found the vocabulary difficult to understand. Phonics is taught daily in Reception class and Years 1 and 2. However, the teaching of phonics does not enable all pupils to make rapid progress. Not all pupils are able to use phonics skills to decode unknown words. Consequently, some pupils are not making sufficient progress in reading.
- You and your leadership team have accurately assessed the effectiveness of reading strategies within the school. Training for staff has taken place very recently and a number of changes are being initiated in all classes to develop pupils' reading stamina, comprehension and inference skills. You are reviewing the teaching of phonics so that all pupils make strong progress.
- The second key line of enquiry focused on how effectively activities and experiences meet the needs of pupils in the Reception class. This was in response to recommendations for improvement in your previous inspection. There is a wide range of carefully planned activities which engage children in their learning inside and outside the classroom. Activities are specifically designed to address all areas of the early years curriculum, and there is a balance between child-initiated and adult-led learning. There is a focus on language development. Adults engage children in talking about their experiences and encourage children to retell stories. Children I spoke to were very confident speakers and were able to express their thoughts and feelings clearly.
- In the early years, children work and play together well. Children spoke enthusiastically about their activities. They demonstrated high levels of concentration and were able to play cooperatively, taking turns and sharing. Children were drawing story maps and were able to retell their stories while other children listened to them attentively. A group of children were totally immersed in a role play superhero's game they had devised. One boy came to explain that I should not be scared because 'it is just pretend'. The range of learning opportunities enable children to engage in reading, writing and number activities both inside the classroom and outdoors.
- Finally, we looked at how well pupils apply their writing skills across the wider curriculum. Attainment in writing in 2018 for both Year 2 and Year 6 pupils was high. Progress in writing for pupils in Year 6 was well above the national average. The teaching of writing is closely linked to high-quality children's texts. This inspires pupils to attempt to use challenging vocabulary in their descriptive writing. They are taught to write effectively in different styles and contexts, for example the pupils' rewriting of the story of 'The Happy Prince' by Oscar Wilde was engaging and well written. This is because the text captured their imagination and interest.
- However, when looking at topic books across Years 1 to 6, pupils did not show the same attention to presentation, or to the composition and the effect that their writing has on the reader. There were limited opportunities for pupils to practise their writing in the wider curriculum. In many books, the use of correct punctuation and grammar was not evident. Pupils do not edit and improve their writing in these books in the

same way as in their English books. Therefore, mistakes are infrequently addressed and pupils often misspell common words. The leadership team recognise that this is an area that needs improvement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' writing in all subjects is as good as it is in English, applying the skills they have learned across the curriculum
- pupils are given a range of reading experiences to develop their vocabulary and skills, including phonics skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Frances Hawkes  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the senior leadership team and five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I evaluated the work in pupils' writing and topic books with a group of subject leaders. I visited classes from Nursery to Year 6 to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. I spoke to pupils in lessons and around the school. I also met with a group of pupils and considered the 85 responses on the pupil survey. I evaluated records about keeping pupils safe and pupils' attendance. I met with a group of parents and considered the 24 responses submitted on Parent View. I also considered the 21 responses on the staff survey.