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Mrs Geraldine Marshall
Principal
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Marshall

Short inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school became an academy in August 2015 with the Romero Catholic Academy, a multi-academy company (MAC). You took up your post as principal in January 2017.

St Gregory's is a caring and inclusive school. Parents and carers say that their children are very happy at school and that it feels like a 'village school in the city'. Pupils say that they are taught to respect and look after one another.

Parents are very supportive of the school and are fully involved in school life. Parents and grandparents are invited into key stage 1 classes every week to read with their children and grandchildren at the start of the day. Parents say that this helps them to support their children more effectively with their reading at home.

The Friends and Relatives of St Gregory's (FROGS) parents' group works hard to support the school and other parents. The group has produced a leaflet for parents of Reception class children with frequently asked questions and key information. The FROGS group hosts a stand at the parents' evenings to answer parents' questions.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities takes place which benefit pupils, their families and the local community. For example, pupils grow vegetables in the school

allotment and sell them to parents and members of the community. They even provide vegetables to the local pub for the meals they serve to customers.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. They value the support they receive to improve their teaching and say that they are proud to work at St Gregory's. Middle leaders who are new to their posts receive support to develop expertise in leading their subject or phase. Leaders acknowledge that, as a relatively new leadership team, there is more to be done to strengthen leadership further.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers consistently plan activities that were accurately matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils. They were also asked to ensure that there were more opportunities for pupils to work independently, or in groups, to explore their own ideas.

It is clear that the school has moved on since the last inspection. There has been a strong focus on developing independent learning. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning. They undertake research homework projects which engage and inspire them. For example, for a project on the Second World War pupils produced a wide range of posters and presentations on different aspects of the war. These included a comparison of Churchill and Hitler as leaders. Pupils explored their ancestors' experiences of the war. These projects demonstrate pupils' excellent independent learning skills, including research and wider reading and writing for a real purpose.

Evidence in pupils' books demonstrates good progress in science and other subjects such as history and geography. Teachers plan learning around the particular interests of their class. For example, pupils in Year 6 have studied Greek myths in some detail, linking this to the history of philosophy and democracy in modern Britain.

In the early years, activities are well planned around children's interests and needs while developing their core skills of reading, writing and mathematics. For example, children chose from a wide range of activities based on the story of the 'Three Little Pigs'. These included sequencing the events of the story along a path marked out on the floor and writing sentences to retell the story using pictures as prompts. Some children bought tickets for the 'theatre' and watched other children retelling the story using puppets. Other children made models of houses out of different materials and tested which were the strongest. As a result of these carefully planned activities, children made good progress in their learning. Records of children's learning show that children make good progress as a result of well-planned activities.

Teachers have had training to develop their skills in 'active learning' techniques. The impact of this is evident in almost all classes where pupils work well in groups to solve problems together. There is also some evidence of impact from recent training and support for teachers in using effective questioning. However, this is not done consistently well in all lessons. Some teaching still does not match activities to pupils' abilities accurately enough to ensure that all make rapid progress.

There has been an increased focus on encouraging reading for the most able pupils, but, as this is a recent development, there is limited impact so far. Pupils attend reading clubs at lunchtime and after school. Leaders acknowledge that, although they are working hard to improve the teaching of reading, there is more that could be done to improve the teaching of explicit reading skills, particularly for older, more-able pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

- Leaders are vigilant and follow up thoroughly on any concerns raised about pupils. Effective support is provided for pupils and their families when they need it. For example, pupils join the Rainbow nurture group when they are going through challenging times at home. This helps them to build their confidence and feel they are not alone. Parents appreciate the support staff provide.
- Children say that they feel safe, and they are taught, in lessons and assemblies, how to stay safe. Pupils described how the recent internet safety day had taught them ways to keep themselves safe online. Effective monitoring and filtering systems are in place to prevent pupils from accessing inappropriate material online.
- Governors support and challenge the school effectively to ensure that safeguarding practice is robust. Leaders provide termly safeguarding reports to the committee. The safeguarding governor visits the school regularly to check on practice and reports back to the local academy committee (LAC).

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, I met with you and the vice-principal to discuss the key lines of enquiry I had identified in my pre-inspection analysis. These were:
 - the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the impact of pupil premium funding
 - whether teaching across the school addresses the needs of all pupils, looking particularly at the progress of the most able pupils
 - whether good leadership and management had been maintained since the last inspection and since the school became an academy
 - the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- You agreed that these lines of enquiry were consistent with the priorities in the school's development plan and with the priorities for the Romero MAC.
- Leaders have ensured that all teachers focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in all classes. Barriers to learning are identified early and additional support is put in place to help pupils overcome them. Additional pupil premium funding is spent on a range of interventions, including the provision of additional teaching support, extra-curricular activities and support to improve attendance and punctuality. As a result, the majority of disadvantaged pupils are now on track to achieve at the expected standard for their age, and a higher proportion are now on track to achieve at the higher standard. Disadvantaged

pupils who previously had poor attendance or were frequently late to school have received support to improve attendance and punctuality. They have responded well to being given roles with specific responsibilities such as fruit monitors, which motivate them to attend and not be late for school. Governors receive regular reports on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They ask challenging questions to hold leaders to account for the impact of additional funding.

- The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Teachers and other adults have benefited from well-focused training and support to help them improve pupils' learning. For example, most teachers now ask challenging questions which help them to assess pupils' learning, identify any misconceptions and address them quickly. They design specific activities to help pupils move on from their starting points. This, together with teachers' strong subject knowledge, supports pupils to make good progress.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not use pupils' prior learning as effectively to decide on next steps. As a consequence, pupils make slower progress.
- The most able pupils benefit from targeted support from additional teachers in small groups. In one small-group mathematics session the teacher was able to judge the pace of pupils' learning effectively and move on quickly when pupils were ready. Any misconceptions were addressed swiftly so that the fast pace of learning could be maintained and no pupil was left behind.
- Many pupils read fluently and with good intonation. They read often and talk enthusiastically about what they read and which books they like. There is room for the most able pupils to extend the range of books they read to ensure that they read widely and are sufficiently challenged.
- Younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to decode unfamiliar words. Some older pupils have less well-developed reading skills, which means that they make mistakes and sometimes misunderstand what they have read.
- The leadership team is committed and ambitious to improve the standard of education further. Although only recently formed, they work well as a team. They support teachers effectively to improve and, in turn, they are well supported by the Romero MAC. Good practice is recognised and promoted. Teachers from academies within the MAC work together effectively to share good practice through network meetings and opportunities to moderate their assessments. Many of the teachers from St Gregory's are now leading on aspects of practice across the MAC.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers have opportunities to observe high-quality teaching so that they consistently plan and deliver lessons that take into account pupils' starting points and move learning on rapidly
- they continue to develop leadership and management as members of the relatively new leadership team develop in their roles

- they develop further expertise in the teaching of reading so that pupils who need it receive targeted intervention and support to improve their reading skills
- all pupils, particularly the most able, are more actively encouraged to read a broader range of increasingly challenging texts.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local academy committee, the chair of the multi-academy company board of directors, the company accounting officer, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the vice-principal at the beginning of the day. We discussed your school evaluation document and the school development plan. We agreed the key lines of enquiry for the inspection, which were informed by my pre-inspection analysis and our discussions. We also agreed the inspection activities.

We jointly visited lessons or small-group interventions in Year 6, Year 5, Year 3 and Reception.

I met with the vice-chair of the LAC and looked at minutes of LAC meetings and the most recent principal's report to the LAC.

I reviewed the school's single central record and discussed the school's safeguarding practice with you as the designated safeguarding lead, and with the vice-principal and the learning mentor. I talked to pupils in lessons and in the playground and asked them for their views on whether they feel safe. I also asked them for their views on school life.

I reviewed a number of other school documents, including curriculum plans, assessment information and current attendance figures.

I spoke with nine parents at the start of the school day. I also spoke to parents and grandparents during a 'reading together' session and took account of 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 19 free-text responses. I took account of 18 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

I heard pupils read, and looked at their reading record books and their writing and mathematics books.