

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Elizabeth Hamilton
Headteacher
St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School, Dartmouth
Milton Lane
Dartmouth
Devon
TQ6 9HW

Dear Mrs Hamilton

Short inspection of St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School, Dartmouth

Following my visit to the school on 23 March 2017, 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 January 2010.

This school continues to be good

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

Your hard work, and that of your staff, has ensured that the school continues to improve under your determined leadership. You understand clearly the school's many strengths, but also know that there are still areas to work on, such as progress in mathematics at key stage 2. Securing high quality teaching is at the heart of your drive for continuous improvement. You told me of your 'relentless focus' on improving the education of disadvantaged pupils and this is a phrase that could justifiably be used to describe your approach as a whole. You are not satisfied with anything less than the best for your pupils. The fruits of this can be seen, for example, in the extremely strong writing produced by pupils of all ages.

You are supported well by the school's governors. The chair took up her post in January 2017 and is bringing enthusiasm and drive to her new role. The governing body is relatively small, but meets very regularly and is supplying you with the level of challenge that good leaders need. You also work with the area adviser from your multi-academy trust, Plymouth CAST.

Parents are very pleased with the quality of the education the school provides. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. Typical comments in the survey

spoke of the 'close-knit community of children', the 'approachable' teachers and the 'unwavering support' that staff give to pupils and their families. One parent referred to the way the school develops 'well-rounded, polite, caring and positive individuals'. My observations and my discussions with pupils support these assessments. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education when they leave at the end of Year 6.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Vigilance is the watchword and teachers have weekly updates on safeguarding. This means that, should an incident occur, staff are very well placed to take immediate and effective actions to protect children. Pupils feel very safe in the school and can describe how teachers and other staff keep them from harm. Parents concur: all of those who responded to the online survey said that their children feel safe in the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. This includes the register of the pre-employment checks made on teachers and other staff.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry during the inspection related to the progress that pupils make in mathematics in key stage 2. In the national curriculum assessments in 2016, pupils in key stage 2 made very strong progress in their reading and writing. Their progress in mathematics, however, was in line with the national average. You have rightly made it a priority to bring the progress of pupils in mathematics up to the rate of progress they make in reading and writing. The changes you have made to the teaching of mathematics, including through teacher training, are having a noticeable, positive impact on the progress of pupils across key stage 2.
- The teaching of mathematics provides pupils with high levels of challenge. As a result, pupils' fluency, reasoning and problem-solving are developing quickly. They enjoy their mathematics lessons and being made to think hard by the work they are set. Pupils show resilience in the face of difficult problems and are keen to stick with them until they are solved.
- My second line of enquiry concerned the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils made progress in line with other pupils nationally. Extensive sampling of the work of disadvantaged pupils in all year groups shows that good outcomes for this group are being sustained. High-quality teaching in the classroom, together with additional targeted support, ensures that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making good progress. The school is clearly making good use of the additional funding provided by the pupil premium.
- A third line of enquiry looked at the way the school promotes the progress of the most able. In our initial discussion you identified this as an area the school has been working on recently. The work of the most able pupils across all year groups is very strong and indicates that they are making good progress, especially in writing. By the time they reach Year 6, the most able can produce

writing characterised by sophisticated sentence structure, wide vocabulary and secure grammar, punctuation and spelling. Moreover, they can use these skills to write for a variety of purposes. The school's focus on writing across the curriculum means that the most able produce highly developed written work in religious education, science, history and geography. In mathematics, the most able rise to the challenge of complex work, especially in problem-solving, and can explain their reasoning well. This picture of good progress for the most able across the school is supported by assessment information. In the key stage 1 national curriculum assessments in 2016, a higher proportion of pupils achieved greater depth within the expected standard than pupils nationally.

- The inspection's final line of enquiry concerned the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In 2015–2016, their attendance was too low and persistent absence was too high. School leaders have worked very effectively to tackle this. Attendance for this group of pupils has improved and is now in line with all pupils nationally. Persistent absence has also reduced.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements to the teaching of mathematics are consolidated further so that pupils' progress in key stage 2 matches the progress they make in reading and writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Plymouth, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you at the start of the day to establish the inspection's key lines of enquiry and we had further meetings throughout the day. Together, we visited the lessons of all the classes in the school, where we also talked to pupils and examined their work. I had meetings with the chair of the local governing body and with the area adviser from your multi-academy trust, Plymouth CAST. I spoke to the interim chief executive officer of the trust by telephone. I held a discussion with a selection of pupils of different ages. Before and during the inspection, I examined a range of the school's documents, including your self-evaluation. In making my judgements, I took into account 16 responses to the online survey of parental opinion, Parent View. I also examined the results of the surveys of pupils and staff.