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Ms Megan Stratton
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Dear Ms Stratton

Short inspection of St Clare's School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 2016 with Linda Lyn-Cook, Ofsted Inspector, 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 outstanding in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, you have been promoted to headteacher and there has been a significant change to the membership of the governing body. You, with the assistant headteacher who is responsible for behaviour, have energised the staff to make further improvements, notably to behaviour.

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to address the area for improvement identified in the previous inspection report: to use data already collected by the school to compare the progress made by pupils in the school to the progress made nationally. You have done this by:

- working with the local authority to develop a reliable measure, which enables you to compare the progress of pupils from key stage 2 to Year 11.
- evaluating the progress of pupils using several different types of published information, such as Fischer Family Trust or Aspire, which allows you to compare the progress of your pupils with all pupils nationally.

In addition, you have benchmarked the outcomes of your pupils with other schools, both mainstream and special, locally. These actions have contributed to the raising of leaders and staff's expectations of pupils, and have supported the improvement in pupils' progress and behaviour.

Leaders evaluate the outcomes for pupils, including progress, attendance and behaviour of groups, very well and in detail. This enables you to focus your attention on those areas and groups that you need to improve. However, although adequate, the evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils published on the school website is not as detailed as the evaluation shared with inspectors.

St Clare's is a welcoming school in which all staff, who have high expectations of pupils, know and care for pupils as individuals. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and make very strong progress in all aspects of their learning. All staff, all pupils and most parents who spoke to inspectors or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaires, agreed that pupils are safe, well looked after and happy at school. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said how they had made friends since joining the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You are an experienced designated lead for safeguarding and you have ensured that staff and governors are well trained. Your training is up to date and you have recently ensured that all staff have had additional training on child protection from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in addition to briefings on the 'Prevent' duty. Governors and senior leaders involved in appointing staff have also recently updated their safer recruitment training.

The safeguarding policy and procedures are up to date; take account of the most recent version of 'Keeping children safe in education'; and are fit for purpose. You ensure that safeguarding records are sufficiently detailed and that they are stored securely. In addition, you have recently commissioned an external review of safeguarding arrangements and have addressed the few recommendations for improvement included in the review report.

Staff are clear about their responsibilities and what to do if they should have a safeguarding concern. You are equally clear about your role and take prompt and decisive action when necessary, including referring cases to the local authority designated officer. You understand the thresholds for referral to social care and you are quite prepared to persevere with outside agencies to ensure that the safeguarding needs of your pupils are met.

Pupils' attendance was close to the national average for all pupils and above that of pupils with similar needs in 2015/16. It has improved so far this year. Leaders track and evaluate pupils' attendance closely, particularly for those who are at risk of becoming persistent absentees. They know the families well. Most of the pupils who have the poorest attendance are absent because of medical or health needs related to their additional needs. School staff are supportive of families and employ credible strategies to support pupils' attendance. In addition, leaders involve the educational welfare officer in those cases where absence poses the greatest risk.

Inspection findings

- You have high aspirations for the pupils and you are determined and decisive in your leadership of the school. You have established rigorous systems and processes that provide you with a clear view of the school and the information you need to identify the improvements that you need to make. You and the assistant headteacher have a good understanding of what good and outstanding teaching looks like and how to develop teaching further.
- Leaders know the school well. They evaluate the performance of the school well and identify those areas that need improvement. They then act decisively to secure the necessary improvements. For example, you identified that the outcomes of White British boys were not high enough and put in place appropriate strategies to address this. As a result, the outcomes for White British boys improved to at least be in line with those of other pupils.
- Governors also have an accurate understanding of the school and hold leaders to account well. They challenge and support leaders effectively. Governors are well informed and use strategies, such as link governors who follow individual classes, to good effect to secure an overview of school performance and practice in addition to important contextual information that informs discussions about performance.
- Governors know that the information they receive from leaders is accurate because they know how assessments are moderated and benchmarked. They are then able to understand comparisons with other pupils using published information.
- Leaders and teachers have a comprehensive understanding of the progress pupils make. They implement a well thought out strategy to identify pupils' starting points, to benchmark and then to track progress across all cohorts, subjects and year groups. Leaders and teachers quickly identify any pupil at risk of falling behind and swiftly provide interventions and support to ensure they make rapid progress.
- You have worked most effectively with the local authority school improvement officer to devise a method of comparing progress across four subjects with national outcomes using the same methodology as the Department for Education measure of progress, Progress 8. This shows clearly that, using this measure, pupils' progress from Year 6 to Year 11 has improved compared with previous years and is above the national figure for all pupils with the same starting points. This is supported by other published data, which shows that pupils' rate of progress is significantly above the national value added figure, for example when you compare all pupils with the same starting points in science.
- The benchmarking activities and analysis undertaken by leaders demonstrate that pupils make very strong progress from key stage 2 to key stage 4 across all subjects. In addition to the school internal pupil performance information, evidence from visits to classrooms, speaking with pupils and looking at their books shows that pupils currently at the school are also making outstanding progress.
- All pupils make very strong progress, from their starting points and given their individual needs, in literacy across the curriculum because there is a consistent

and strong emphasis on literacy and there are many and varied opportunities for pupils to read from a range of texts and to read out loud. In each visit to classrooms, inspectors heard examples of pupils independently reading fluently and confidently or reading with appropriate support.

- Leaders have increased the number of subjects in which pupils enter GCSE examinations; in 2013 a very few pupils entered two GCSEs – science and art – compared to a third of the cohort entering four GCSEs, including English and mathematics, in 2016.
- Leaders have improved the proportion of pupils who remain in education, employment and training in Year 12. Currently all Year 12 former pupils are in education, employment or training. This improvement has been achieved because leaders have established effective processes to ensure that placements are secure, including the transition arrangements, which start at the beginning of Year 11 and continue into Year 12.
- Teachers and learning support assistants have a very good all-round understanding of every one of their pupils. As a result, teachers use precise methods to challenge pupils at just the right level to enable them to make rapid progress. Teachers and learning assistants are highly skilled. They know when to step in, when to encourage, challenge, question, probe, prompt or tell a pupil what to do or how to behave. This, in addition to their very good subject knowledge, enables teachers and learning support assistants to take learning risks in lessons. The excellent quality of teaching supports the overall development of the pupils and the strong progress that they make across the curriculum.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that arrangements for welcoming parents at the beginning of the day ensure pupils are safe, warmly welcomed and engaged in meaningful activity, such as football, at the earliest opportunity.
- Pupils are well cared for in lessons and around school. They thoroughly understand school processes and systems for behaviour.
- Leaders reviewed and revised the whole-school approach to behaviour in the autumn of 2015 and this has contributed to a significant improvement in pupils' behaviour. For example, the number of fixed-term exclusions in 2015/16 was more than nine times less than in 2014/15, and to date there have been no fixed-term exclusions this year.
- Behaviour in classrooms is calm, orderly and purposeful. Leaders, teachers and support assistants manage transitions from lessons to break and from room to room, including from classrooms to the hall for assembly, very well and the behaviour of pupils is excellent overall. For example, pupils are polite and hold doors open for each other and adults without being asked.
- Pupils settle quickly to their learning in each lesson and time is used effectively. Work in pupils' books shows that they work hard to present their work well and they take pride in their work. This reflected the positive attitudes to learning seen during visits to classrooms.
- Pupils were seen to make huge efforts in their learning and persevered when tasks became increasingly challenging. When pupils looked as if they were going to lose interest, staff effectively encouraged and prompted them to carry on.
- Adults' higher expectations of pupils are reflected in pupils taking increasing responsibility for themselves and others as they progress through the school, for

example older pupils taking additional responsibilities at lunchtime acting as servers.

- Leaders implemented a new system for monitoring incidents of inappropriate behaviour following revision of the behaviour policy in September 2015. This supported better analysis and evaluation and led to more effective intervention and, significantly, to prevention. For example, breaktimes are much more structured, with a range of activities for pupils to choose from, such as lunchtime dancing. Such evaluations now routinely inform adults' practice. Overall, the impact has been a prevention-focused approach by adults and a significant reduction in incidents among pupils. This is further exemplified by the significant reduction in the number of restraints since September 2015.
- Supervision of pupils is very effective. Staff manage arrivals well each morning, welcoming pupils individually and checking that they are signed in properly. They ensure that each pupil is actively engaged in activity or conversation as they wait to enter class. Similarly, staff supervise pupils effectively in and around school, including breaktimes, although leaders need to ensure that supervisors modify their field of supervision on the odd occasion when a colleague is dealing with a first aid issue.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- reports on the school website showing the impact of funding streams, such as the pupil premium grant, on pupils' outcomes are sufficiently detailed.

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

Yours sincerely

Derek Myers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, the officer responsible for the single central record, the attendance leader, the behaviour leader, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and a parent governor. Inspectors also met with members of staff and considered the responses to the staff survey. We reviewed a range of school documentation. Inspectors visited classrooms and learning areas to observe teaching, talk with pupils and look at their work. Inspectors evaluated information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors observed and talked with pupils in their classes. Inspectors met with you and reviewed your systems and processes relating to safeguarding. Inspectors met with a number of

parents at the beginning of the school day and considered their views alongside the responses from Parent View. Inspectors also reviewed the school's website.

The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

During the inspection I followed four lines of enquiry:

- Is safeguarding effective?
- Do pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points given their needs?
- Leadership and management; have leaders effectively addressed the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection, and have leaders met their statutory duty to provide parents with information?
- How effectively is behaviour managed?