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Mrs Patricia Graham
Headteacher
St Mary Queen of Martyrs VC Academy
Nidderdale
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Dear Mrs Graham

Short inspection of St Mary Queen of Martyrs VC Academy

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your personal drive and determination to ensure that all pupils achieve at least good outcomes are shared with your dedicated staff team. You have high expectations of staff and pupils. Leaders have created a culture of ambition, of working together and of continuous improvement. They have the skills and subject knowledge to successfully support their colleagues to improve the school and do this in a persistent, but very positive, way. Pupils and adults say that the school is a happy place to learn, where everyone is valued and listened to.

Teaching and learning have continued to improve since the last inspection. This is because of your accurate self-evaluation and your focus on the right priorities for improvement. Leaders and staff are confident in their roles, but open to advice and support to continually improve their practice.

Successful work to raise attainment and accelerate progress in the early years and key stage 1 is reflected in the improving outcomes for pupils. In 2016, Year 2 pupils made strong progress from their starting points and this is reflected in the rising number of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics from lower starting points at the end of Reception. Leaders are working hard to ensure that the new key stage 1 team is well supported in maintaining and building on these positive outcomes.

The current work of pupils shows that their progress through key stage 2 is strong. You have introduced systems to encourage pupils of all abilities to extend and deepen their understanding. These systems are understood well by everyone and are having a positive impact on the progress pupils are making. All pupils understand your high expectations. They focus on their learning and produce high-quality, detailed work. Pupils talk confidently about how they know they are improving. Teachers' clear directions and challenges to enable pupils to take the next steps help them to make gains in their learning. You recognise that, at times, some pupils would benefit from better access to resources to help them when they find work challenging, so that they do not need to rely exclusively on the teacher to help them to progress. In most classes, the most able pupils and those of middle ability are challenged to deepen their understanding and reasoning. However, this challenge is variable across the school. Your work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has resulted in stronger progress for this group. You acknowledge that you could develop your tracking of the support for each pupil so that you have a more precise picture of the difference your work makes to their achievement.

The work that leaders have undertaken to create more opportunities for families to be involved in their child's learning is recognised and valued by parents and staff. This partnership gets off to a good start in the early years and continues through activities such as 'Stay and Read' sessions, phonics information sharing, celebrations of drama and musical performances and invitations to take part in lessons. Consequently, parents feel that communication is improving and that they have a better understanding of their children's learning.

Pupils are proud to be part of the school. They are polite, respectful and appreciative of how the staff make learning fun and give help when it is needed. Leaders' newly introduced systems to promote good behaviour are having a positive impact. Pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping children safe takes priority among staff and leaders at the school. The recent appointment of a full-time safeguarding officer has increased the time available to support vulnerable pupils and their families. The safeguarding officer has quickly gained a good grasp of the school's context and systems. She has already refined procedures and checked that training, record-keeping and processes are fit for purpose. She has started to establish positive relationships with families across the school.

The trust has sought external expertise to make checks on procedures for safeguarding, such as overseeing the efficient management of the single central record. As a result, leaders have been guided in making further improvements to the effective systems in place.

Pupils are taught a range of ways to keep safe, right from the early years. This includes using equipment and areas of the school safely, and how to keep safe in a

variety of different situations, for example when online and out in the community. Pupils say that school is a safe place because they are well cared for and can talk to a grown-up if they have any worries.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have received appropriate training and have a clear and up-to-date understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- Provision and outcomes in the early years are improving. Over time, a higher proportion of children have reached the good level of development which is typical for their age by the end of the Reception Year. The improved outdoor learning space is now not only extremely inviting and well organised, but provides a wealth of exciting learning opportunities through well-planned activities that are modelled effectively by adults. As a result, children accessing these areas sustain concentration without adult intervention. During the inspection, children were developing a range of skills through their work about pirates and treasure islands. Engagement was very evident, as were positive attitudes to learning. Children were working as a team on their 'pirate ship', writing messages in bottles using their knowledge of phonics to help them, making a treasure island in the soil and walking the plank. One boy who 'fell off' the plank shouted that he was fine because he knew how to swim, and then pretended to swim to shore. This work is a reflection of the good-quality provision which is supporting children to develop their imagination and their social and communication skills.
- Leaders have carefully considered how they spend the pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium leader's plans take careful account of pupils' current assessments and any potential barriers to learning. Numerous, effective strategies are in place, including booster sessions, one-to-one tuition, teaching assistant support, smaller class groupings for English and mathematics and breakfast club activities. As a result, most disadvantaged pupils make strong progress over their time in school. Pupils are confident about the progress they are making and know their strengths and what they need further support with. The leader tracks progress carefully each term and meets with teachers to discuss further improvement. Leaders agree that pulling all of the information together about the support each individual child is receiving will help them to check the impact of this work more precisely.
- Teachers' clear direction and strong support for the most able pupils in key stage 1 are ensuring that they are deepening and broadening their understanding and skills. These pupils are making good progress. In key stage 2, in some classes, teachers have focused their support on plugging any gaps in pupils' learning to achieve the new curriculum-expected standards. Leaders and teachers agree that more support now needs to be given to the most able and middle-ability pupils to make sure that they achieve greater depth in their learning. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to address this.
- Leaders have been successful in developing a curriculum that is engaging and

purposeful and gives wider learning opportunities for all pupils. Expectations in the quality of work produced are equally high across all subjects. A large number of trips, drama activities and extra-curricular activities, such as Irish dancing, knitting, football and information and communication technology, have a high profile and are eagerly talked about by pupils. For example, pupils were animated about the recent 'Matilda' performance and trips to London and their City of Culture, Kingston upon Hull. The partnership with a school in Sierra Leone has encouraged pupils to look at different ways of life and communicate digitally with children who live thousands of miles away. Pupils have raised money through non-uniform days and bun sales to buy books and information technology equipment for their friends overseas. One child said, 'Our lives are completely different. We are so fortunate.'

- Staff have created a well-organised, welcoming environment. Corridors around the school celebrate learning and events that have taken place. In a number of classes, pupils have ready access to a range of resources which support them to persevere independently when they find learning tricky. However, this is variable across the school. In some classes, these resources are not readily available and pupils are overly reliant on the support of adults to help when they find their work difficult.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's individual plans for disadvantaged pupils are refined to include all types of support in place – academic, emotional and social – so that frequent checks can be made to evaluate the impact of this work fully
- there is greater consistency across the school in the resources available to pupils to help them to work independently and develop resilience when they find work challenging
- the most able and middle-ability pupils, particularly those in key stage 2, are challenged consistently to achieve the highest standards across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I looked at specific aspects of the school's work, including leadership and the quality of teaching and learning, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged and the most able. I also reviewed the quality of provision in the early years and the school's safeguarding arrangements.

You and I worked closely together throughout the inspection, observing teaching and learning, looking at pupils' work and discussing the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. I listened to pupils read and reviewed school documentation. I met with school leaders, the school business manager, representatives from the trust, staff and pupils. I noted the responses returned by staff and parents in the Ofsted questionnaires.