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Mrs Michelle Walsh
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Walsh

Short inspection of St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 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 October 2013.

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, since your appointment as headteacher in September 2015, provided strong and effective leadership. You have high expectations of all pupils and ensure that these are shared and put into practice by all staff. Staff and parents and carers value your leadership and recognise and appreciate that you put the welfare and well-being of all members of the school community at the heart of all the work that you do. You, together with the deputy headteacher, have a detailed knowledge of the pupils and understand their individual needs and aspirations. When you have identified less-effective teaching, you have taken strong and decisive action to ensure that all pupils at the school are well taught.

You use monitoring and evaluation extremely well to identify areas where the school needs to improve further. The school improvement plan focuses on a manageable and appropriate set of priorities. These are measured closely against sharply defined success criteria and milestones for when actions are to be completed. You were in full agreement with the key lines of enquiry that I had identified for the inspection and had already identified the need to address them within the school improvement plan. You have already taken positive and appropriate actions to bring about improvements in pupils' writing. However, you agree that further development work needs to be undertaken to ensure that all pupils make greater progress in this aspect of their learning.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The most able pupils in school are now provided with more challenging tasks to do. Teachers and other staff encourage pupils to explain their thinking in mathematics, although this is not as consistently established in English lessons.

Governors provide good levels of challenge and support to you and other leaders. They use the information that is available to them to understand the school's strengths and how it needs to improve further. Governors know that the school is not yet outstanding but are ambitious to implement actions that will enable this to be the case. Governors took over the management of the on-site pre-school provision from September 2017. They recognise the advantages of having direct control of the work of all the staff involved in the education of the early years children. You and other leaders, with support from the local authority, are providing support to the pre-school staff to develop the teaching of phonics further in early reading from the time that children start at the school.

The partnership working arrangements, that you have been instrumental in establishing with four local Catholic schools, are proving to be beneficial and productive to all involved. The cluster group is used effectively to allow staff to share and observe particularly strong teaching practice and to moderate assessment information to ensure that it is accurate and fully represents pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers use this assessment information well to monitor the progress of all pupils, including the relatively small number of disadvantaged pupils in school. While these pupils are now making stronger progress, you are aware of the need to continue to diminish differences between their outcomes and those of other pupils nationally.

You ensure that there is a strong focus in school on enabling pupils to develop as positive citizens of modern Britain who understand and demonstrate the need to show respect and tolerance towards others. An example of this is through the trip to the 'faith trail' in Derby that has been established in the past two years. Key stage 2 pupils now benefit from the opportunity to visit different places of worship, including a mosque, a gurdwara and a synagogue. This helps them understand how the beliefs and traditions of other religions are of great value and importance to people of different faiths. This supports the school's Catholic values, which are exemplified through virtues, including 'compassionate and loving' and 'eloquent and truthful', that pupils discuss and develop each term. As a result, pupils are caring, empathetic individuals who appreciate the opportunities they have to take on responsibility in school, including as members of the 'eco squad' and as 'prayer partners'.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding that is promoted effectively by leaders and is fundamental to the work of the school. The mantra 'It could happen here' is understood and adhered to by all staff.

Systems for identifying, recording and reporting any concerns relating to pupils' safety and well-being are effective, well established and understood by all staff. Training for staff is matched closely to the particular needs of individuals. Leaders have a strong understanding of the local context and use this to ensure that pupils are protected from the threat of radicalisation and extremism. Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe. For example, representatives of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children recently led assemblies for all pupils. They also worked with older key stage 2 pupils and provided an after-school session for parents that focused on personal safety.

Inspection findings

- The teaching of writing has improved over the past year. Progress for pupils from their starting points in school had been lower in writing in the 2017 key stage 2 assessments than in mathematics and reading. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that current pupils are now making much stronger progress in this area of their learning.
- Leaders have reviewed the teaching of writing with support from other schools in the cluster group and from local authority advisers. Leaders have introduced a series of 'non-negotiables' for teachers that help to make sure that pupils are provided with prompts and supports to assist in developing accuracy in their writing. Pupils are encouraged to use 'Trypads' on which to attempt the spelling of unfamiliar words and to then check the accuracy using dictionaries and thesauruses. Interventions are delivered each day to address any gaps in learning for pupils that become apparent following the introduction of new concepts.
- Leaders have increased the frequency of assessments of writing to measure more accurately the progress that pupils make against demanding targets. Work seen in pupils' books during the inspection shows that the very large majority of pupils are making good progress in writing and are engaged by the activities that they are set. Teachers now successfully follow a whole-school approach to the teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation. However, they do not consistently ensure that they focus on errors in individual pupils' work, such as the accurate use of apostrophes in words such as 'it's', which would further improve the quality of their writing.
- Teachers generally match questions well to the different abilities of the pupils and require them to explain their thinking and understanding. However, this is more firmly embedded in mathematics than in writing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of the most able pupils and set tasks that engage their interest and stimulate their imagination. For example, in an upper key stage 2 class, a group of the most able pupils applied their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills extremely well in producing narrative writing based on their reading of the book 'The invention of Hugo Cabret'. Pupils demonstrated an impressive understanding of how the use of vocabulary could engage and sustain the reader's interest.
- Leaders have a detailed and thorough understanding of the specific barriers to learning of the relatively small number of disadvantaged pupils in school. They

have recognised that in the past interventions have not always been implemented quickly enough to address any gaps in pupils' understanding of new concepts. As a result, leaders have revised the approach to the use of teaching assistants to support disadvantaged pupils through daily small-group sessions each afternoon that focus on particular aspects of reading, mathematics and writing. School assessment information indicates that disadvantaged pupils in school are now making more rapid progress and differences in outcomes are narrowing against other pupils nationally.

- However, leaders recognise that the changes have been implemented relatively recently and still need further time to be fully embedded and successful. Additional support is being provided this term for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 to address their needs at an early stage in their primary school education.
- Outcomes for pupils in the Year 1 phonic screening had fallen in 2017 and were below the national average. Leaders have reviewed the teaching of phonics in school. They have monitored the teaching of this aspect of early reading and have used expertise from the local authority to support them in this process. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that pupils in key stage 1 have a good knowledge of the sounds that letters make in words and understand subject vocabulary such as phonemes and split digraphs. They apply their phonic knowledge well in their writing and are showing increasing accuracy.
- Leaders have identified the need to ensure that staff in the pre-school provision are provided with further support and guidance to ensure that they are all sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable in the teaching of phonics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers more accurately identify errors in spelling and punctuation in pupils' work that are relevant to individual needs and that will support them in their writing
- the effective use of questioning that is employed by teachers in mathematics is further developed in the teaching of writing
- recent interventions for disadvantaged pupils are fully embedded to accelerate further progress for all of these pupils
- staff in the pre-school provision are provided with further professional development opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills in the teaching of phonics.

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

Yours sincerely

Adam Hewett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a middle leader. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and looked at free-text comments from parents. I visited, together with you and the deputy headteacher, six classes to observe learning. I listened to pupils from key stage 1 read. I spoke with pupils in lessons and at lunchtime. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime on the playground.

I scrutinised information about pupils' progress during the last academic year. I considered other documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school improvement plan. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including policies and checks on staff employed in the school, and checked the school's website. I also analysed the range of views expressed by staff and pupils through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school.