

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



3 May 2017

Mrs Tracey McGeever
Headteacher
St Nicolas CofE Academy
Windermere Avenue
Nuneaton
Warwickshire
CV11 6HJ

Dear Mrs McGeever

Short inspection of St Nicolas CofE 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 the predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in 2013 you have successfully created a culture of shared and devolved leadership that involves a wide range of staff in shaping the development of the school. You have encouraged and enabled teachers to take on responsibility and as a result, you, together with other leaders, have improved key aspects of the school's provision.

In 2014, the governing body decided to become part of the Diocese of Coventry multi-academy trust. Joining the multi-academy trust has benefited St Nicolas CofE Academy and other schools. The trust provides expertise and acts as a critical friend. You have been proactive in creating opportunities for teachers and other staff to observe and share good practice within the school and in other local schools. This has helped staff to identify how they can further improve their own leadership and teaching skills, and has also allowed them to offer support to colleagues in other schools.

You have established a caring and inclusive ethos in the school that celebrates success at all levels. The school's mantra of 'succeed, nurture and aspire' is understood and valued by pupils and staff alike. The strong Christian values that underpin all aspects of the school's work help pupils develop as considerate individuals who fully understand and demonstrate the need for compassion, respect and tolerance for others. This is shown through pupils' involvement in regular charity fundraising events, including Children in Need. You show determination to

include all pupils in the full life of the school, regardless of any social or educational barriers. While there is a palpable sense that St Nicolas CofE Academy is an inclusive school you are aware that the school does not fully meet requirements in addressing its responsibilities under the public sector equality duty.

You have encouraged teachers to be innovative in their teaching. This has helped to develop a curriculum that engages pupils' interest and allows them to apply key skills in reading, writing and mathematics across other subjects. One pupil commented, 'Teachers keep us entertained.' This exemplified the highly positive views that pupils hold about the school and their appreciation of the opportunities that they are offered. Pupils also value the chances they get to enhance their learning through extra-curricular clubs, including gymnastics, hockey and mini basketball, and through residential visits in Year 5 and Year 6. The very large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire and who spoke to me during the inspection expressed positive and supportive views of the school.

Pupils are well behaved, polite and caring. They show determination to achieve well in lessons and take pride in their work. The classrooms are set up well to promote learning and to celebrate pupils' achievements. Children in the early years make very good use of the well-resourced outdoor classroom. Staff provide these children with a good range of learning activities that promote independence and help them to make a positive start in school.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that were identified in the predecessor school's previous inspection report. Assessment systems have been revised to ensure that all staff are more aware of how pupils in their classes are progressing. Consequently, they now plan the next steps in learning more accurately. Evaluation and monitoring processes have been improved so that leaders, including governors, are in a stronger position to plan for future improvements. Outcomes for pupils have improved. In 2016, the proportions of pupils in Year 6 who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national average. The proportions who were working at greater depth were well above the national figure in reading and above it in mathematics. You have made sure that pupils have more opportunities to write across a range of subjects. You agree with me that pupils still need to apply their knowledge of grammar more accurately in their writing. You, together with other leaders, have recognised that to further improve outcomes for pupils in mathematics there is a need to provide more opportunities for pupils to undertake problem-solving involving reasoning.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff understand and follow the school's clear systems for identifying and reporting any concerns relating to safeguarding. Regular training, including on combatting extremism and radicalisation, and female genital mutilation helps to ensure that staff fully understand their responsibilities. Robust systems are in place for managing and recording safeguarding issues when they do occur. You have ensured that all senior staff are trained to the higher levels in safeguarding and can

consequently undertake the role of designated safeguarding leader, if required to do so. Leaders follow recruitment procedures well to ensure that all staff appointed to the school do not pose a threat to pupils. Pupils are provided with clear guidance on how they can keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- The key skills in writing, such as spelling, punctuation and grammar, are taught effectively. Teachers expect pupils to take care with the presentation of their work and give them regular opportunities to practise these skills. The highly effective teaching of reading, including the teaching of phonics, helps pupils to develop accuracy in their spelling. There are strong links in place between reading and writing, and teachers place a high emphasis on ensuring that pupils have opportunities to read high-quality texts that stimulate their interest.
- Leaders and teachers make sure that opportunities for pupils to apply their reading and writing skills in other subjects are well established. As a result, pupils produce well-thought-out pieces of writing in subjects such as science and geography. Regular opportunities for pupils to undertake longer, independent pieces of work are firmly in place. However, teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils apply grammar and punctuation techniques appropriately in their writing. As a result, some pieces of written work are not as coherent and of as much interest to the reader as they could be.
- The teaching of computational skills, such as multiplication, division and measurement in mathematics, is strong. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to make sure that pupils' understanding in these areas is secure. Leaders monitor pupils' progress to ensure that no individuals or groups fall behind. While the majority of pupils make generally good progress in mathematics, opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge and to use reasoning when solving problems are not fully embedded as yet. This adversely affects pupils' chances to make even better progress.
- There are strong and robust systems in place, involving all leaders, to ensure that monitoring and evaluation are used effectively. This allows leaders at different levels to gain an accurate and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. These include regular scrutinies of pupils' work and analysis of assessment information. Outcomes from monitoring are used effectively to develop well-thought-out improvement plans that have clearly defined success criteria.
- Governors provide high levels of support and challenge for school leaders. They play a key part in the monitoring of the school's work and use a wide range of information to see how well the school is doing in comparison with other schools.
- Leaders ensure that the additional funding the school receives, including the pupil premium grant and funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is used appropriately and effectively. The leader of provision for special educational needs and/or disabilities has developed this aspect of the school's work extremely well and, as a result, these pupils are now achieving better outcomes.

- School leaders have ensured that there is a highly inclusive ethos in school that supports vulnerable pupils well. This is shown through the care that is provided for all pupils, including those who have complex learning, physical and social needs.
- Opportunities for all pupils to play a full part in the life of the school and to participate in everything that the school offers are at the heart of St Nicolas CofE Academy's work. However, leaders have not ensured that the school fully complies with the public sector equality duty, including publishing its equalities objectives and consulting with those affected by inequality.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their mathematical and computational skills and knowledge and to use reasoning when solving problems
- all teachers make sure that there is greater focus in the teaching of writing on making sure that pupils fully understand how to use their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar effectively and appropriately in their writing
- appropriate public sector equality objectives are developed and published that support the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Coventry, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. 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, two assistant headteachers and two middle leaders. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the Diocese of Coventry multi-academy trust. I considered the 128 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and looked at free-text comments and a letter from parents. I visited, together with you and the deputy headteacher, eight classes to observe learning. I listened to some pupils 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 through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school and its leadership.