

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 February 2018

Mrs Sinead Smith
Senior Executive Principal
St Benedict's Catholic Primary School
Church Walk
Atherstone
Warwickshire
CV9 1PS

Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Along with other leaders, you have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the predecessor school was last inspected. In March 2015, the school joined the Holy Spirit Catholic Multi Academy Trust. Since that time, you have worked with the school's senior leadership team to improve further the quality of education provided for all pupils. The board of directors has recently completed a restructure of leadership positions and you, along with a new senior leadership team, have high expectations of all staff and pupils.

All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to be part of the school and enjoy working at St Benedict's. They agree that the school has a culture that is aspirational for all pupils and the great majority believe that the school has improved a lot since the last inspection. Parents and carers are supportive, and the great majority would recommend the school to others. As one parent said, 'This is a great school and truly a nurturing environment.'

Pupils spoke positively about the school. Relationships between pupils and adults are strong. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Across the school, pupils have opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, such as those of school council representatives. Older pupils have additional school-wide roles, such as those as school captains, head boy and head girl, play leaders and prayer buddies. Pupils are proud of their contribution to school life and these opportunities help to prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Outcomes in writing have improved and they are above those seen nationally at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Pupils have regular and varied opportunities to apply their writing skills in a range of subjects. You have introduced a comprehensive approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This helps you to assess the impact of staff training, to ensure that new approaches are embedded, and to identify strengths and any aspects that require improvement. As a result, teaching is of a high quality across the school.

Outcomes at the end of key stages 1 and 2 are generally in line with those seen nationally. However, some pupils, especially the most able, are not doing as well as they could at the end of key stage 2 and this is an area for improvement. Similarly, you are aware of the need to improve the progress pupils make in mathematics.

The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and rates of attendance have improved over the last 18 months so that they are now close to the national average. However, attendance for some of your most vulnerable groups of pupils remains too low and further action is required to address this aspect.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an effective culture of safeguarding in the school. The principal and vice-principal, as the designated safeguarding leads, do all that they can to ensure that the school is a safe environment for pupils. Leaders emphasise that safeguarding pupils is everyone's responsibility and all staff have regular and appropriate training to help them understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe from harm.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You work with external agencies as necessary and governors understand their role in overseeing and monitoring the effectiveness of school safeguarding procedures. Pupils are well cared for at all times.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that they are taught to stay safe, for example when online. Pupils said that bullying happens very rarely and they are confident that any issues would be dealt with rapidly. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agreed that their children feel safe in school.

Inspection findings

- Provision for vulnerable pupils, especially those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, has improved. Pupils' needs are identified more quickly than in the past. Access to effective support means that the majority of these pupils are now making more rapid progress from their starting points. Gaps in attainment between these and other pupils are beginning to close. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that, while pupils receive the support that they require, they also have the opportunity to work independently. Adults address gaps in pupils' knowledge and any misconceptions as rapidly as possible.

- Leaders have identified the need to provide more opportunities to maximise pupils' potential and, where possible, to work at greater depth. As a result, teachers' planning is now more effective in meeting the different needs and levels of ability within their class, including for the most able. In most lessons, pupils can choose the level of task at which they will work. The majority of pupils make a considered and appropriate choice based on their level of understanding. This approach is helping to improve pupils' confidence, especially in tackling unfamiliar problems. Teachers also provide challenge tasks to help pupils apply their learning more effectively. Pupils' books show that the majority are working within the standards expected for their age. As yet, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes on the number of pupils achieving at the higher standards.
- Along with governors and other leaders, you recognised that pupils' progress in mathematics was not good enough. You have taken decisive action to address this. You introduced a school-wide, daily programme to develop pupils' arithmetic skills. As a result of this programme, pupils report that they feel more confident in their calculation skills and you report an increase in the outcomes of weekly tests. You and the subject leader have also introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics, supported by training for staff. There is evidence of increased opportunities for pupils to use practical resources and to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems. Pupils are increasingly encouraged to 'prove it' and to use mathematical skills across a range of different subjects. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' attendance improved in 2017 and attendance rates were close to the national average. However, the attendance of vulnerable pupils, including those eligible for free school meals and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, remains too low. Information for the current school year paints a similar picture. You track the attendance of individual pupils carefully and understand the circumstances behind pupils' absences. You work closely with families and external agencies to try to improve attendance when it falls below an acceptable level. However, you are aware of the need to do more to improve pupils' attendance further. The procedures you and your staff follow, including contacting parents on the first day of absence and working with the local authority, help to ensure that pupils are in school, safe and not at risk of going missing from education.
- Since the last inspection, the school has increased in size and now attracts many children from the local area as well as children from families of the Catholic faith. While the profile of children entering school in Reception Year varies from year to year, on average, children begin school with knowledge and skills that are a little below those typical for their age. The curriculum is adapted to match the children's interests and it is focused appropriately on developing their early literacy skills. The majority of children make good progress in Reception Year and are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils, especially the most able, realise their potential and achieve the higher standards at the end of key stage 2
- developments to maximise pupils' progress in mathematics are embedded across the school
- actions are taken to maintain improvements in attendance and improve rates of attendance for vulnerable pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local academy committee, the chair of the board of directors of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Crooks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the principal, vice-principal and other members of staff. I met with representatives of the local academy committee and the board of directors of the multi-academy trust, including the chair of the board. I talked with parents at the start of the day and with pupils, both formally and informally.

Together we visited all classes, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some books. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I scrutinised several documents, including your school self-evaluation, assessment information and documents relating to safeguarding.

I took account of 30 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 16 free-text responses. I also took account of 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 66 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.