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Mr M Brannigan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brannigan

Short inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 October 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your strong and purposeful leadership has enabled St Alban's to flourish. Your vision for the school is clear and senior leaders share your high expectations and uncompromising drive for school improvement. Your staff are motivated and committed to ensuring that pupils at St Alban's receive the very best education.

You have joined a multi-academy trust that is effective at holding the school to account. Regular reviews provide high-quality challenge to you and your team to help ensure that the school remains on track to achieve its ambitious goals. When areas for development are identified by the trust, you speedily make the improvements needed. Following a recent trust review, pupils in key stage 1 are now more regularly recording their reasoning about number in their mathematics workbooks. Governors visit the school regularly to check on the improvements being made.

Since the predecessor school's last inspection, pupils' progress in English and mathematics has accelerated rapidly. The majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress. As a result, the school is now

achieving standards substantially above those seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics and many pupils exceed the expectations for their age. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities also make rapid progress from their starting points. Children in the early years make very strong progress and are well prepared for Year 1. A much higher number of children achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception compared to the national average.

Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning. They work very hard and are proud of their achievements. Pupils are resilient and enjoy the challenges that teachers plan for them. They are not afraid to take risks in their learning. One pupil confidently reported that 'it is OK to make mistakes because that's how we learn'. Pupils are ambitious about what they can achieve. As a result, pupils complete tasks to very high standards.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and your leadership. Many parents who I spoke to explained that leaders are readily available to discuss any concerns that they may have. Parents are delighted with how well leaders know their children's interests and accomplishments. Parents report that their children are happy to go to school each morning. Nearly all parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, felt that their child was taught well and making good progress. The vast majority of parents report that they would recommend the school to other parents.

You have a clear understanding of the school's many strengths, which include the wide range of enriching opportunities that the curriculum provides for pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to attend many extra-curricular activities, including sewing club, table tennis and engineering club. They are also able to attend an exciting selection of school trips to enhance their learning in school. However, you are not complacent. For example, you rightly identified that pupils' experiences in some subjects needed to improve. As a result, you have recently implemented new programmes to address this. In order to improve pupils' learning further in the wider curriculum, you have also changed the way in which foundation subjects are taught.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and thorough. Staff and governors undertake annual safeguarding training. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of the processes and procedures for reporting concerns. Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and understand their role in keeping pupils safe. A nominated governor regularly checks the school's systems for vetting and recruiting staff.

Pupils are very proud that their school is a 'telling school'. Pupils know that, if they are concerned or worried about anything, they are always able to tell an adult. They talked about the many ways in which the school teaches them to stay safe, for example through lessons about keeping safe online, 'stranger danger' and road

safety.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I evaluated: how leaders ensure that pupils in all year groups make strong progress in English and mathematics; and how the quality of the wider curriculum has an impact on pupils' learning in all key stages.
- Jointly with your deputy headteacher, I observed learning in all classes. Progression from year to year was clearly evident. Teachers ensure that they challenge pupils at all levels, in all year groups. As a result, pupils across the school make strong progress in English and mathematics. Teachers' high expectations for all pupils were evident through the quality of writing and mathematics in pupils' workbooks. Many pupils achieve exceptionally well in these core subjects.
- Pupils apply themselves diligently to the tasks set for them. Those that I spoke to were able to articulate clearly what they were learning. Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate their learning. This successfully enables pupils to develop their independence and take the lead in their own learning.
- Additional adults effectively support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teachers' planning ensures that disadvantaged pupils are also well supported and appropriately challenged. As a result, these groups of pupils make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Teachers' planning ensures that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to enrich their knowledge and understanding in the wider curriculum. In most year groups, pupils' writing across the curriculum, and particularly in history and geography, is of the same high standard as it is in English. Similarly, pupils are given lots of opportunities to use their mathematics and science skills in an effective cross-curricular way, which results in pupils strengthening their knowledge in both subjects.
- Pupils make strong progress in the foundation subjects and science. However, changes to the curriculum for some subjects, such as computing and design and technology, are very new. Recently, you have also changed the way in which foundation subjects are taught. However, it is too early for you to have fully evaluated how these changes impact on pupils' accumulation of knowledge and skills over time. Leaders, governors and the trust are right to continue to monitor this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- changes already made to the wider curriculum successfully enable pupils to build their knowledge and skills as they move through the school across all subject areas.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive

officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Luisa Gould
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy to discuss and agree the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. Jointly with your deputy, I observed learning in English, mathematics and a range of foundation subjects. I evaluated pupils' work in English, mathematics, foundation subjects and science. We discussed the school's assessment information about outcomes for current pupils, your plans for improvement and your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I met a number of representatives from your governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust. I considered 128 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and took account of parents' free-text comments. I analysed a range of school documentation, including policies and procedures, and minutes from governing body meetings. I met with your school business manager to review safer recruitment practices. I checked other safeguarding documentation and procedures.