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Mrs Gillian Wretham
Principal
St Giles' Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Wretham

Short inspection of St Giles' Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 November 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Following a period of significant change in the leadership of St Giles' Catholic Primary School, you and other senior leaders have swiftly identified priorities for improvement that are understood by all. Your evaluation of the school is thorough and accurate. An outward-looking approach that seeks to learn from best practice is apparent. Together with your new leadership team, you welcome challenge and work supportively in order to improve standards across the school.

Governors play a full part in school improvement. They know the school very well and are fully committed to working closely with school leaders to improve provision. Governors match their skills to their various roles carefully, which enables them to provide effective challenge and to offer you strong strategic support.

You have addressed some of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Leaders' and teachers' work has focused on improving pupils' English skills, with a particular emphasis on improving the achievement of boys. Effective training and support, both from within the multi-academy company (MAC) to which the school belongs and beyond, aim to raise standards in the teaching of English and mathematics. Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum, which is supported by bringing in expertise from across the MAC for specialist subjects such as physical education (PE) and computing.

Pupils are polite and confident. They demonstrate the utmost respect towards one another and adults both in and out of the classroom. Pupils are keen to talk about their school, saying that teachers know when to help someone and that all of the new staff are really kind. They enjoy learning and are keen to help each other. Pupils try hard in their work and demonstrate exemplary behaviour in lessons. They are given responsibilities in school, such as taking on the role of school councillors, and they actively participate in charitable fundraising. Involvement in these sorts of activities ensure that pupils are keenly aware of the importance of helping other people who are less fortunate than themselves.

Children achieve well from the secure foundations established in Reception, where the majority of children achieve at least a good level of development. The teaching of early reading is a strength of the school. The standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check are above those of pupils nationally. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 has been greater than the national average for a number of years. However, achievement in key stage 2 has been inconsistent, particularly in English.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school and speak highly of the successes their children achieve. Those parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and those who spoke to me at the start of the day were complimentary about the staff and the support their children receive. A typical comment was that staff 'go out of their way' to keep parents informed of their child's progress. Parents were supportive of the initiatives you have introduced to encourage pupils, and boys in particular, to read both at home and in school. However, more work is needed to actively engage more parents in supporting their child's reading comprehension skills at home.

Safeguarding is effective.

St Giles' Catholic Primary School places a high priority on keeping all pupils safe. Leaders, including governors, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that staff training is fully up to date. The school's safeguarding policy meets statutory requirements. Appropriate agencies are involved where necessary and the introduction of an electronic system ensures that all concerns and incidents are recorded in detail.

Pupils and most parents are confident that issues are followed up. Pupils are clear that they are safe in school. They say that bullying rarely happens in school and, if it did, they are confident an adult would intervene. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in different situations.

Attendance is carefully monitored, and positive action is taken to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

Inspection findings

- During my visit, we agreed to focus on how well boys in key stage 2 were being stretched and challenged to develop their reading and writing skills. This was because the performance of boys in reading, writing and grammar has been below that of girls for the last three years. Prior to the inspection, you had rightly identified the need to raise attainment for boys and all teachers understand that this is a key school improvement priority.
- You have provided targeted support to improve the progress pupils make in writing and have implemented a system of self- and peer-assessment strategies. Prior to teachers providing feedback, pupils are now beginning to use checklists to peer assess their writing, which helps them to identify areas for improvement. However, this is not yet consistently embedded across the school.
- In order to inspire boys to read and write well, you have introduced 'Wow' weeks, focusing on themes to engage pupils. For example, the focus on 'journeys' captured pupils' imagination and encouraged them to extend their writing creatively.
- We also explored how effectively teaching is improving pupils' knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar. This was a development point from the previous inspection and is still an area for improvement, particularly in relation to the performance of boys. The new marking policy means that teachers are more vigilant in correcting basic errors in, for example, capitalisation and punctuation. However this is not yet fully embedded.
- Effective training in the teaching of reading, mathematics and writing has increased teachers' knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the new curriculum. Expertise from across the MAC has contributed to the success of this training.
- You have rightly identified the need to ensure that all staff are able to contribute effectively to improving the progress pupils make, particularly in key stage 2. You have identified the need to reorganise support staff so that their skills and experience can be matched to classes and subject areas in order to maximise their impact. Where this has taken place, pupils are now well supported in their learning and adult intervention is more effective.
- Effective training, led by the vice principal, is beginning to contribute to improved teaching of reading comprehension skills, particularly in key stage 2. This has been complemented by investment in non-fiction and fiction books to engage boys as enthusiastic readers.
- Leaders have implemented a rigorous assessment system that is closely monitored to ensure that pupils are making the progress they are capable of. School leaders use this information to identify appropriate support for pupils who fall behind and need to improve. The MAC calendar ensures that monitoring and moderation activities take place at regular intervals.
- Pupils' outcomes in English have varied over the past three years. You have ensured that accurate assessment of writing is now secure through robust moderation and detailed monitoring of each pupil's acquisition of skills.

Moderation across year groups and across schools within the MAC contributes to the accuracy of such assessments. Teachers are able to use this assessment information to carefully plan pupils' future learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and support staff continue to develop their skills in, and understanding of, the teaching of writing across key stage 2 so that all groups of pupils achieve well
- a whole-school approach to editing and improving pupils' work, linked to the new marking policy, is fully embedded so that basic errors are consistently addressed
- the recently introduced reading comprehension strategies are embedded so that pupils can recognise what is being asked of them and make good progress in reading
- parents are more actively engaged in supporting their children to develop their reading comprehension skills at home.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy company, 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

Susan Blackburn
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and all your staff, the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of the MAC. I spoke to the senior improvement adviser for the diocese. I also met with the vice principal. I reviewed documentation relating to pupils' progress, achievement and attendance, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks, and policies and procedures. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and examined the evidence to support this. I observed pupils in classes, around the school, including on the playground, and spoke with a group of pupils responsible for the school council. You and I visited lessons together in key stages 1 and 2 and discussed our observations. We also looked at books and spoke to pupils about their work. The 72 responses to the Parent View questionnaire and the 59 free-text responses were taken into account. In addition, I spoke with parents at the start of the school day.