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Ian Gallagher
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Dear Mr Gallagher

Short inspection of St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the staff have created a caring and friendly environment. 'My child has been welcomed into the school community, she is happy and thriving in a positive learning environment' and 'My children have made considerable progress over the years' were just some of the comments made by parents about St John the Baptist Catholic Primary.

Since your appointment in September 2014 you have worked well with other leaders and staff to continue strengthening different aspects of the school. Children in the early years are encouraged to be curious, creative and confident individuals. These attributes stay with pupils as they move through the school. You have high aspirations for the pupils and make sure that they take part in a wide variety of experiences. Visits to local places of interest, such as Warwick Castle and the River Tame, bring learning to life and contribute positively to pupils' personal development. Governors share your high expectations. Through regular visits they gain secure first-hand knowledge of the school. This enables them to ask pertinent questions and offer an appropriate level of support and challenge.

Leaders have an accurate view of teaching and give staff some useful feedback. This feedback is helping to improve teaching further still and ensure that pupils achieve well over time. On occasions, this feedback is not precise enough and it does not make clear what actions teachers need to take to raise the achievement of specific groups of pupils. In a few classes, some of the most-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) could make even faster progress as confirmed through our visits to lessons and work in pupils' books.

At the previous inspection leaders were asked to give pupils the opportunity to apply their mathematical knowledge in a range of subjects. The actions that leaders and staff have taken have not only helped to improve pupils' mathematical understanding they have also enhanced pupils' enjoyment of mathematics. Boys and girls of all ages spoke enthusiastically about mathematics and described it as a 'fun' subject. Weighing and measuring ingredients for Anglo-Saxon biscuits and analysing and interpreting information gathered during scientific investigations are just some examples of activities pupils complete as part of the wider school curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have successfully created a culture where the importance of keeping pupils safe is a shared responsibility. Leaders, teachers, support staff, midday supervisors and governors empower pupils to keep themselves out of harm in different situations. Through assemblies, class presentations and information leaflets the pupil eCadets help their classmates to stay safe online. The eCadets were keen to tell me about digital footprints and to think carefully before posting personal images online. The pupil eco-warriors meet with the chair of the governing body to identify potential hazards around the school site and discuss how they can be resolved.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are well trained. They keep a close eye on pupils and make sure that they take prompt and effective actions when issues arise. Leaders greet parents at the start of the school day. A number of parents I spoke with stated that they appreciate this daily welcome because it gives them a chance to share relevant information and discuss any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- Leaders use their analysis of pupils' achievement to identify the pupils who could make even faster progress. Appropriate support is put in place to help individuals catch up with their learning successfully. At the same time, leaders and staff work together to establish why some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. In response to their findings, staff make carefully considered changes to the school's curriculum and the way in which pupils are taught. To improve boys' achievement, for instance, staff correctly identified that weak literacy skills were preventing boys from making strong progress. Engaging topics, an emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary and helping pupils to read with accuracy become a focus for all staff. The positive impact of these developments was clearly evident during my visits to classrooms. Boys of all ages were enjoying their activities, speaking fluently and reading with confidence. The school's assessment information shows that the differences between the attainment of boys and girls currently in the school are diminishing quickly.
- The proportion of Year 6 pupils who exceed the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics has increased since the previous inspection. However, this proportion remains below the national average. Teachers are getting better at planning activities that challenge the most-able pupils. In Year 5, for example, pupils used ideas and techniques from the book 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' to make their own writing captivating. Pupils showed a real stamina for writing, they used effective vocabulary and edited their sentences to make sure that they made sense. In a

few classes, teachers are not fully proficient at setting work that consistently challenges the most-able pupils. This is preventing some most-able pupils from reaching even higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

- You have rightly recognised that the progress made by SEND pupils in recent years has been varied. The actions leaders are taking to help these pupils achieve well are making a difference, especially in key stage 2. Pupils' work shows that tasks are carefully crafted so they are accessible and build on pupils' previous learning. There is scope for developing the practice of teachers in key stage 1 further so that they routinely plan activities that are more suitably matched to the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Most pupils present their work well at all times. This is particularly the case in topic books, where pupils enjoy showcasing their work in different ways. However, in a few classes teachers do not make sure that pupils write neatly or teach pupils who struggle with their handwriting to hold their pencils correctly.
- Pupils behave well and treat each other with care. Parents and pupils I spoke with confirmed that incidents of bullying are low and that when they do occur they are handled well. Last academic year, the number of fixed-term exclusions was higher than the national figure for primary schools. Discussions with leaders and school records confirm that exclusions were used as a last resort. School records show that behaviour incidents have markedly reduced since last year.
- The school's learning mentor plays a pivotal role in promoting appropriate behaviour. Through experiences such as caring for Alpacas and groups such as the 'Conflict Crushers', she encourages pupils to express their feelings calmly and to appreciate the views of others. Breaktimes are well organised. Pupils can choose to play with a range of equipment or sit in the quieter areas. The school's sports coach supervises football games well and encourages pupils to adhere to rules and to be aware of their surroundings while running with the ball.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the advice staff receive from leaders following the monitoring of teaching, identifies precisely the actions teachers need to take to raise pupils' achievement further
- the proportion of pupils who exceed the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics continues to increase
- staff in key stage 1 set work that is more correctly pitched for pupils with SEND
- teachers ensure that pupils present their work to a consistently high standard.

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 Solihull. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese. You joined me on visits to classrooms to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and informally with pupils throughout the school day. I considered the 12 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. Responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires were also considered. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement planning, information about pupils' achievement and documents relating to keeping pupils safe.