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Mrs Mary O’Friel
Executive Headteacher
St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School
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Birmingham
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Dear Mrs O’Friel

Short inspection of St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 leadership team are clear about the strengths and weaknesses in the school. You and school leaders have identified specific areas for improvement accurately and are taking appropriate action to address them. Governors are equally clear and knowledgeable about the school’s strengths and priorities. They understand the barriers and challenges that the school faces but do not accept them as excuses. They are aspirational for pupils. Governors hold leaders to account and are developing their skills further to ensure that they continue to offer appropriate challenge and support.

Very few parents responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View. However, parents spoken to at the beginning of the inspection were positive about the school. They say that their children are happy and safe. The school’s own questionnaire for parents, completed earlier this term, confirmed this.

Pupils behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning even when they are not being challenged in lessons as well as they could be. They are polite and courteous and hold doors open for adults. They are keen and enthusiastic to share their learning and contribute their thoughts and ideas. In most lessons, pupils are focused on their learning. The relationships between staff and pupils are strong.

You ensure that your pupils have a wide range of opportunities through educational visits, residentials and after-school clubs such as multi-skills, chess and multicultural

music making. This contributes well to their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. During the morning of the inspection, pupils were performing a 'musical extravaganza' to parents. Pupils sang in the choir and performed on a range of instruments including the violin, cello and keyboard to celebrate cultural diversity.

The local authority and the diocese offer you appropriate support and challenge. For example, you have worked with the local authority to develop clearer plans for school improvement. Leaders now analyse assessment and outcomes more precisely. You also work with schools within your local Catholic partnership and with staff in the school you are federated with to moderate pupils' work, share good practice and provide support for vulnerable pupils.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The introduction of a new approach to the teaching of mathematics has had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes by the end of key stage 2. Pupils' attainment is consistently above the national average. In the past year, the teaching of mathematics has been further refined so that the pace of lessons has improved and pupils apply their skills in reasoning and problem-solving activities more frequently.

An effective behaviour system has ensured that behaviour is good and the number of behaviour incidents has reduced. The learning mentor teaches a programme to help pupils manage their own behaviour. Since the last inspection there have been no temporary exclusions. The nurture group provided by the school supports pupils well so that they can work more effectively in the classroom. This year, leaders have introduced a programme to further develop pupils' learning behaviours.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and the reporting of concerns are thorough. Staff know who to report to if they have concerns about a child and what signs to look for. Leaders and the school's family support worker ensure that children and families receive the right support at the right time.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. Pupils know that they must not share their personal details or talk to people they do not know.

Inspection findings

- In 2018, reading attainment at the end of key stage 2 dipped below the national average at the expected standard. Attainment in reading also declined in key stage 1. Leaders account for this as a result of the high number of pupils who joined or left the school before the end of each key stage. Pupils often join the school with little or no English or with very limited school experience. However,

they make good progress. Leaders can demonstrate that pupils who have been in the school since the beginning of each key stage achieve stronger outcomes. Some pupils in key stage 2 missed the expected standard in reading by a few marks.

- The teaching of reading is a priority. Leaders use additional adults to provide support in reading sessions. Leaders are improving the range and quality of texts available to pupils. The school's approach to reading is helping pupils to develop their skills in reading more effectively, especially in key stage 2. Pupils explore different aspects of reading and develop their vocabulary. For example, they make predictions, ask questions, clarify the meanings of words and summarise text. Teachers help pupils to analyse texts by posing more challenging questions. Pupils know that a particular type of question requires more evidence from the text. For example, pupils in Year 6 used their inference skills to explain that a Victorian character in the story was poor because 'he had holes in his boots'.
- Pupils read regularly, individually, in groups and as a whole class. Pupils enjoy listening to their teacher read to them. High-quality displays around school encourage reading. They pose questions such as, 'Why is reading important?' and make suggestions such as, 'Talk to your friend about the books you have read', with examples of book reviews. Pupils enjoy reading and can name some of their favourite authors.
- In key stage 1, some pupils read confidently and with expression. However, the quality of teaching in reading is less effective than in key stage 2. Pupils who work independently in reading are not challenged sufficiently. Too many are left to their own devices. They are not helped to move on when they are ready to, and learning time is lost. Sometimes the next step in learning does not build appropriately on pupils' prior learning. Some pupils need more support to understand what some words mean.
- Although the proportion of children in early years who achieve a good level of development is below the national average, children make good progress. Staff ensure that children learn sounds and letters so that they can build simple words. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported through focused teaching, repetition and reinforcement. Teachers expect children to pronounce sounds and words correctly. The most able children are encouraged to use their phonics skills to read and write simple sentences. Children's handwriting is developing well because most adults correct children's inaccurate letter formation. However, sometimes teachers' expectations are too low. For example, when writing simple sentences children were not expected to use a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence. Sometimes the next steps in learning do not provide sufficient challenge or support and this limits children's progress.
- While outcomes in mathematics remain strong at the end of key stage 2, they dipped in key stage 1 in 2018. Although the mobility of pupils affected these outcomes, the new approach to the teaching of mathematics needs to be embedded further in key stage 1. Pupils are beginning to develop their skills in mathematics over time more securely. They use drawings and resources to help them in their calculations. They are given a range of simple word problems and have opportunities to reason and explain their thinking. Some open-ended

activities allow pupils to develop their thinking in a methodical way. However, sometimes pupils' poor presentation in mathematics hinders their ability to calculate accurately. On occasion, teachers do not address pupils' misconceptions or challenge pupils to explain their mathematical understanding fully. This means that pupils do not move forward in their learning as well as they might.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in key stage 1, all pupils are challenged in reading to develop their reading skills effectively when working independently
- in mathematics in key stage 1, teachers address pupils' misconceptions promptly and challenge their thinking so that they make better progress
- teachers provide appropriate models and have high expectations for pupils' presentation in mathematics in key stage 1 to support them in their learning
- in early years all teachers have high expectations and provide appropriate opportunities for children to apply their learning in independent activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the leadership team, the chair of governors and other members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the two written responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 77 responses to the school's own parent questionnaire. I also considered the 32 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, the school self-evaluation and school improvement plans, the minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information. I visited classrooms with you and the head of school and looked at pupils' work in mathematics. I observed pupils' behaviour at the beginning of the school day, on the playground, and during lessons. I spoke to a group of pupils about reading and spoke to other pupils and staff informally throughout the day.