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Mr John Kenny
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kenny

Short inspection of St Dunstan's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2019, 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school is a well led and stimulating place in which to work and learn and has continued to improve since the last inspection. Following new senior staff appointments, including a deputy headteacher, you have developed a strong leadership team to help you continue to improve the quality of education provided. Staff morale is high.

Governors at St Dunstan's Catholic Primary School have high expectations for pupils. They use their expertise to good effect and have a positive impact on school improvement. They support and challenge leaders by asking pertinent questions about teaching and learning, and pupils' attendance.

Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those who spoke to me during the inspection expressed positive views about the school. They say that their children are safe, happy and well looked after. They also say that staff are highly visible, approachable and available to sort out any issues they have. A small number of parents expressed concerns about the lack of communication they receive regarding their children's progress. My discussions with governors also identified communication with parents as an area needing further development.

This is a fully inclusive school where pupils' differences are embraced. Pupils say, 'It is okay to be different as we are all one team.' Pupils behave well and show care and consideration to their peers.

You have successfully maintained the school's strengths and made progress with the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. For example, presentation and handwriting in pupils' books is now neat and legible.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. Governors work closely with the designated leaders for safeguarding and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They are well informed through the safeguarding link-governor and are up to date with training; they check safeguarding procedures so that pupils are kept as safe as possible. You ensure that all staff and governors are well trained and clear about policies and procedures. You check their understanding regularly. Safeguarding is a high priority and formal fortnightly meetings of the safeguarding team and regular updates in staff meetings ensure that procedures are regularly monitored. The record-keeping for the recruitment of staff is thorough. Concerns about pupils are carefully logged and appropriately detailed. You follow up concerns in a timely manner and escalate them further when necessary. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- You are highly experienced and continually look for ways to improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You are supported by a well-informed governing body and an effective deputy headteacher. Together, you have identified clear strengths and areas for improvement. You have recently appointed three newly qualified teachers. Although new in post and getting to grips with their roles, they clearly demonstrate potential. Training and support are being provided to assist them in doing their jobs well.
- Over time, progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 has been below national figures. However, recently pupils' progress has improved and is now in line with the national average. This inspection found that improvements in the teaching of reading have also helped improve the quality of pupils' writing. In Year 6, for example, pupils talked with enthusiasm about their whole-class text of 'Goodnight Mr Tom' and the reading and writing activities they had undertaken related to the book. Furthermore, the classroom practice I saw and the work in pupils' books indicates clearly that the teaching of writing is strong. Teaching assistants provide timely and effective support for pupils who need it. In addition, teaching prompts pupils to evaluate, edit and improve their own and other pupils' writing. A newly installed writing wall celebrates pupils' writing achievements and serves as an aspirational example to those pupils who need to make better progress in writing.
- Your procedures for managing and analysing pupils' absence are well organised. School staff are quick to call parents and carers when a pupil does not turn up and make home visits where necessary. Your strict adherence to these

procedures has resulted in improved attendance rates across the school. However, a few pupils continue to miss too much school. This disrupts their learning. More needs to be done to ensure that more pupils attend school regularly.

- In the recent past, the number of fixed-term exclusions was high, your actions have resulted in a significant improvement in this area. Your decision to exclude a pupil is not taken lightly and you always follow the proper processes. It is a relatively small group of pupils who have been subject to exclusions at the school. During the inspection, leaders gave examples of where they have worked closely with families to enable pupils to receive the support and services they need.
- The school's wider curriculum provides pupils with a range of experiences and opportunities that are rooted within a strong literacy focus. Science is a strength of the school and pupils talked at length about the practical investigations they plan and carry out. When studying the phases of the moon, pupils created the phases visually using chocolate and cream cookies to show the appearance of the moon throughout its cycle. History and geography is taught through a skills-based approach and the school is developing ways to ensure that pupils securely remember knowledge and facts at each stage of learning. Pupils have opportunities to extend their learning through educational visits and activities, including a trip to a Roman fort and taking part in a Viking feast.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- even more pupils make better progress in writing
- they improve communication with parents, so they are clear about the progress their children are making and what they can do to support their children's learning
- they build on the effective procedures for managing absence by providing more targeted support for families of pupils who are persistently absent.

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

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and teaching and non-teaching staff. I also met with five governors and the school's business manager. I had a telephone conversation with the senior school improvement officer from the diocese. I carried out short observations of teaching in different year groups and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I talked with pupils in lessons and at breaktime and met with a small group to talk about school life and work. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. I paid attention to several key lines of enquiry. These included the impact of leadership and management on pupils' progress in writing, attendance and exclusion rates, safeguarding and the curriculum. By the end of the inspection, I had taken account of 64 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 62 written comments. I considered 36 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I looked at several documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, the headteacher's reports to governors, the school's improvement plan, external reports about the school and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe.