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Ms Cindy Stockting  
Headteacher  
St Benedict's Catholic Primary School  
Charlton Lane  
Radstock  
BA3 4BD

Dear Ms Stockting

### **Short inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 December 2015, 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 January 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

- Together with your governors, you have provided strong leadership and the ambition to continue to improve the school. Since your appointment two years ago, you have faced challenges, particularly relating to changes in staffing. However, you demonstrate resilience and optimism and are driving improvements with conviction and determination. The school is now well placed to continue to improve to ensure that every child is given the opportunity to succeed at St Benedict's.
- The previous inspection report identified the need to involve pupils in improving aspects of their learning, school life and the wider community. You have acted to widen the impact of the school council's work. Pupils meet regularly. They make important decisions to enhance their learning and feel included in actions taken to improve their school.
- You and your governors have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and continued areas for improvement. The school's action plan and subject action plans drawn up by your middle leaders set out what needs to be improved further. For example, you immediately recognised the dip in standards in 2015 and are taking the necessary steps to tackle this. Although work in books confirms pupils are now making faster progress, you are not complacent and recognise that there is further work to do.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

- School leaders place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe. You and the governors have made sure that the culture of safety is strong. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff understand their responsibility in keeping pupils safe and are vigilant in following up concerns as they arise. You have raised staff awareness in line with statutory requirements by ensuring that you and your staff have undertaken training in the government's Prevent strategy. This training promotes an awareness of any form of extremism.
- The school's religious character is an integral part of everyday life for all pupils and staff. Parents say that their children are very well cared for and 'love coming to school'. Consequently, attendance is good. Pupils arrive on time for school and say, 'teachers listen to us so we feel safe and secure'. Staff teach children to stay safe when online. For example, class rules for keeping safe on the internet are prominently displayed in the Year 6 classroom. This reminds pupils of the rules in place created for their safety.

## **Inspection findings**

- School leaders know that standards in writing dipped in 2015, particularly in Key Stage 1. You have taken action to improve your chosen approaches to teaching this subject. You have made staff changes to improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2. As a result, there is now a much sharper focus on the teaching of writing. Pupils begin to learn their letters and sounds in Reception. They build their knowledge quickly and learn to use these letters and sounds in their independent writing. Work in pupils' books in all classes since September 2015 confirms teachers' higher expectations and the implementation of consistent approaches to developing pupils' writing skills. Teachers choose texts carefully, particularly to engage the boys. For example, high-quality writing resulted from pupils' analysis of the Anne Frank diaries. Although pupils are making faster progress, leaders agree that those pupils capable of achieving the higher levels could be challenged further.
- Leaders have focused on closing the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils and also between boys' and girls' achievement, particularly in mathematics. Staff attend frequent training to support them in planning work that precisely meets the needs of all pupils, including the most able. The subject leader for mathematics checks pupils' progress regularly to identify gaps in learning and to review the coverage and progression of skills. Pupils are now making up lost ground and an increasing number of pupils are on track to reach the standards expected for their age. However, the most able continue to need specific monitoring to ensure that they receive more challenge and reach the higher levels that they are capable of.

- The headteacher and governors have managed a number of staff changes and new appointments successfully. Teachers understand the increased expectations and are held to account for the achievement and progress of their pupils. Leaders use termly meetings to review pupils' progress with staff and agree actions to improve pupils' achievement. They closely monitor the quality of teaching and provide appropriate feedback to improve teachers' practice. However, the school's records confirm that this feedback lacks a sufficiently sharp focus on identifying the learning and progress of different groups of pupils, including the most able.
- Pupils appreciate the comments that their teachers make in their books and describe how these help them make progress. Pupils explain that the school's approach helps them to know when they need to improve their work and when they have been successful in their learning. On occasion, not all teachers apply the school's agreed policy consistently. However, older pupils talk confidently about marking their own work against the set criteria for the lesson. This is making a positive contribution to improving pupils' outcomes.
- The school teaches French to all pupils, including those in Reception. This early introduction to another language prepares them well for their secondary education and helps to develop an awareness of other cultures.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They concentrate hard on their work and are respectful and polite to adults and to each other. During the inspection, pupils in Year 3 worked in groups to brainstorm ideas for their writing on 'crime and punishment'. All pupils contributed to the animated but sensible discussions. However, the level of challenge provided by teachers occasionally dips. At these times, pupils lose focus and do not work as hard as they could.
- Governors are ambitious and committed to challenging and supporting the school to improve. They bring a wide range of skills, which enhances their roles in the school. For example, they manage finances astutely, checking on the impact of the pupil premium and sports funding. They are vigilant in checking that all safeguarding training, including safer recruitment, is up to date. They make frequent visits to the school to monitor the actions set out in the school's development plan. As a result, governors have a good knowledge of where teaching is strong and where improvements still need to be made to improve pupils' outcomes, particularly for groups of pupils who are underachieving. In discussions, governors confirm that pay increases are only awarded for good performance to ensure teaching is of the highest quality. This strong support and challenge are successfully driving school improvement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- lessons are sufficiently challenging to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, make good progress
- leaders monitor the learning and progress of all pupils rigorously to ensure that all pupils and groups of pupils make good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics
- teachers consistently apply the school's agreed approaches to marking and feedback so that pupils learn from their mistakes and successes in their learning.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Leahy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, your subject leaders for English and mathematics, and the assistant headteacher. I also met with three representatives of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I spoke with parents at the start of the day and with pupils at different times during the inspection, including lunchtime. I accompanied you on visits to lessons and looked in pupils' books. I looked at the survey results from Parent View, the school's own recent parents' questionnaire and the comments provided by text message. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation as well as a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements and recruitment information.