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Mrs Anne Green
Principal
The Faber Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Green

Short inspection of The Faber Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 February 2016 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

In partnership with the staff and directors, you ensure that pupils feel valued and welcome. 'The Faber is small in size, but big in love', and 'this school is the best!', exclaimed pupils when asked to share their views about the school. The pupils I spoke with during the inspection were also very complimentary about the staff. They described the staff as 'friendly', 'kind' and 'helpful'.

The Faber is part of the multi-academy company called The Painsley Catholic Academy. The company is made up of seven schools. The Principal of Painsley Catholic College is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company. Together with a group of directors, he oversees the work of all seven schools. Close links with other schools in the company bring a number of advantages to both staff and pupils at The Faber. Staff receive valuable training and support. Pupils benefit from being taught regularly by specialist teachers in subjects such as physical education. Some of the older pupils have regular opportunities to use the college facilities, for example the gymnastics hall.

In response to the findings from the previous inspection, staff have successfully increased the opportunities for pupils to practise their reading, writing and mathematics skills across the curriculum. The school's approach to marking has also

been revised. In line with the school's agreed policy, staff make sure that pupils are aware of their achievements and what they need to do to improve their work.

The feedback that staff receive from senior leaders following visits to lessons and reviews of pupils' work acknowledges what teachers are doing well and also what could be improved. The CEO fully recognises that this feedback does not always focus enough on the impact of teaching on the progress of different groups of learners. He is planning on supporting senior leaders with this aspect of their work.

There have been a number of recent changes in staffing. You joined the school in September 2015. Two out of the four class teachers left last academic year. Two new class teachers joined the school in September 2015.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective. Staff have relevant training and they have a clear understanding of the steps they need to take in response to concerns about individual pupils. You are tenacious when it comes to following up any concerns. If necessary, you seek additional advice from external agencies in order to ensure that the actions taken are in the best interest of the pupils. A member of the board of directors has specific responsibility for checking the suitability of the school's safeguarding procedures. He makes sure that statutory requirements are fully met.

Through the school curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. The pupils that spoke with me were able to explain why personal information should be kept secure when using the internet. They also emphasised the importance of being careful around unfamiliar dogs when walking to and from school. The school's information shows that incidents of bullying are infrequent and that school leaders take appropriate actions when incidents of poor behaviour occur. Most of the parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire and who spoke with me were positive about the staff's ability to keep their children safe. One parent commented, 'The Faber community is a caring and nurturing family': a view shared by many parents.

Inspection findings

- You, the CEO and the Chair of the Board of Directors have a refreshingly honest view of the school's effectiveness. You all have high aspirations for the pupils and high expectations of staff. Teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff work well as a team. They readily seek advice to improve their practice and appreciate the opportunities you give them to learn from each other and from staff at the other schools in the multi-academy company.
- Your evaluation of the school's work is accurate and based on a detailed understanding of the achievement of different groups of pupils and the quality of teaching. You and the CEO spoke openly with me about the gaps in some pupils'

knowledge and skills caused by previous weaknesses in teaching in one class. The CEO and senior leaders have organised appropriate support for staff. However, when teaching has not improved, they have not shied away from giving difficult messages to individual teachers. The actions that you are taking to strengthen teaching, and to help all pupils achieve equally well, are having a beneficial impact. Work in pupils' books show that although standards in Years 4 and 5 are lower than should be expected, pupils in these years are now making much faster progress. By the time pupils leave the school they make good progress.

- The directors have a wealth of relevant skills and experiences that enable them to rigorously check the impact of senior leaders' actions on teaching and pupils' achievement. They acknowledge and recognise the school's successes and, through probing questions, provide leaders with a good level of challenge.
- Staff successfully help the youngest children to acquire the skills and knowledge that are typical, and often above those typical for their age by the time they start in Year 1. The children in the early years have positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully, speak politely and are respectful towards other pupils and adults. During a mathematical activity, the children carefully counted and divided pieces of chocolate between two 'bears'. As they worked, the children commented, 'we need to be fair'.
- Pupils continue to build on their enthusiasm for learning as they move through Years 1 to 6. They respond very well to instructions from teachers and teaching assistants. The pupils on the school council told me that they like to be involved in making decisions that affect them. Most recently they worked with staff to review the school's behaviour policy. Pupils told me that, as a result of their feedback, teachers will start to use a 'rainbow' symbol to acknowledge improvements in pupils' behaviour.
- Last year, senior leaders correctly identified that boys were not writing as well as girls. In response to this, teachers now plan writing activities that interest all pupils. In one example, the teacher provided pupils with an image of a jungle to help them with their writing. This image successfully encouraged pupils in Years 3 and 4 to use their imagination and to use appropriate and interesting vocabulary to describe the characteristics and locations of different features in the jungle. Some pupils, particularly in Years 1, 2 and 6, are making exceptional progress in writing.
- The presentation of pupils' work is variable. Their work is sometimes difficult to read because letters are not formed correctly. Teachers do not always insist that pupils hold their pencils or pens correctly. This prevents pupils from writing neatly.

- You and the assistant Principal recognise that pupils, and especially the most able, are capable of reaching even higher standards in mathematics. Some teachers have started to plan activities that challenge and deepen pupils' mathematical thinking. In Year 6, for instance, a group of pupils were thoroughly enjoying investigating different shapes and the relationship between area and perimeter. You and the assistant Principal are now looking at ways of sharing this effective practice with staff across the school.
- The school offers pupils the chance to learn a range of skills during before- and after-school clubs. These include a film club, a mathematics club and a cookery club. During the inspection, a group of pupils were relishing making cupcakes. They explained that they had to read the recipe carefully before weighing the ingredients and making the cupcake mix.
- Subjects such as geography and history are well taught. Pupils enjoy learning new facts and gaining new skills. Pupils in Year 6, for instance, told me that it was interesting to learn about 'crime and punishment' in Victorian, Tudor and Roman times and to explore the similarities and differences. Pupils' understanding of different religions is steadily increasing. You are in the process of reviewing the school's planning for religious education in order to ensure pupils have enough time to learn in-depth about different faiths and beliefs.
- 'The Principal is impressive', commented one parent. 'She is fair', said another. The very large majority of parents that spoke with me and responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire were positive about the work of the school and complimentary about the staff. Parents appreciate their increased involvement in the work of the school. Following a request from parents, you re-established the Parent, Teacher and Friends Association. They organised a Christmas Disco and they are now organising an 'Easter Extravaganza'. You have also recently reorganised meetings with parents so that they have the opportunity to look at their children's work before they meet with the class teacher.
- A small minority of parents raised a number of concerns about different aspects of the school's work. These concerns included a lack of facilities on the school site for physical education and the lack of a proper dining space. Senior leaders and directors are aware of these concerns and are currently looking at the possibility of expanding the indoor space available for pupils. You have contacted the personnel involved in levelling the school field to make sure it is safe for the pupils to use. A few parents raised concerns about the quality of teaching in some classes last academic year. The findings from this inspection confirm that senior leaders and directors have taken and are continuing to take effective action to strengthen teaching in the school.
- Staff speak about their school with pride. One member of staff stated, 'we all support each other'; another commented, 'we are a great team'. Pupils are

equally proud of the school. They told me that they 'like their small school because it is like a family'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- all pupils achieve equally well
- teachers provide pupils, and especially the most-able pupils, with activities that deepen their mathematical thinking
- teachers insist that all pupils present their work to a consistently high standard.

I am copying this letter to the Board of Directors, the Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the assistant Principal, staff and the Chair of the Board of Directors. I also met with the Chief Executive Officer of The Painsley Catholic Academy. He is also the Principal of Painsley Catholic College and a national leader of education. I spoke informally with parents at the beginning of the school day and with pupils throughout the school day. The Principal joined me on brief visits to all classes. We talked to pupils about their learning and reviewed some pupils' writing, mathematics and topic work. I took account of the 51 responses on Parent View by the end of the inspection. I reviewed a range of documentation including the most recent information about pupils' progress, the school's own evaluation of its performance, documents related to keeping pupils safe, and minutes of directors' meetings.