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Alison Chambers
Head of School
English Martyrs' Catholic Voluntary Aided Academy
Willow Crescent
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Dear Mrs Chambers

Short inspection of English Martyrs' Catholic Voluntary Aided Academy

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have embedded a successful culture and ethos across the school, in which both pupils and staff feel valued and happy. In this environment, everyone strives to give their best and improve. You and other leaders enjoy a high level of support from parents and staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. They are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

You are supported by an effective senior and middle leadership team. You have encouraged an ethos of high ambition and constant reflection. Consequently, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are improving year on year. The areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed robustly. As a result of the increased challenge in lessons, the most able pupils now make good progress across all subjects; all are exceeding age-related expectations. The school has developed clear and effective systems to monitor pupils' progress and check the quality of teaching. Effective tracking arrangements to monitor all groups of pupils' progress have ensured that intervention is deployed early for pupils who are identified as underachieving. Disadvantaged pupils have particularly benefited from this close monitoring and support. Their attainment is improving towards that of other pupils in all subjects. However, you acknowledge that disadvantaged pupils' progress would be accelerated further if their targets were raised to compensate for previous underachievement.

Pupils' attainment and progress in reading and writing are improving, especially in key stage 2. Current assessments show that a significant proportion of pupils are reaching age-related expectation in all subjects in key stages 1 and 2. While in the last few years the proportion achieving more than expected progress increased, this year, too few are exceeding expectations, which is a key barrier to achieving outstanding outcomes.

Governors are improving their effectiveness. They take their monitoring role seriously and are a visible presence in the school. In light of the previous inspection's recommendations, the governor responsible for health and safety has ensured much-improved arrangements to secure the school site. Subject leaders value the support and challenge governors provide during their regular visits to school. Governors acknowledge that they would benefit from further training and support to understand the school's new assessment systems and its implications for school improvement. Currently, their lack of confidence in these matters has hindered their ability to challenge senior leaders as effectively as they could.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of the risks facing pupils, including the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. Governors oversee the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements well, including by conducting unannounced visits and by meeting with pupils to gauge their views. Pupils receive regular guidance to help them keep safe, especially online. Leaders plan to develop the curriculum to support safeguarding even further next year. Pupils feel very safe, supported and well cared for. Bullying is very rare. Staff and parents agree that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and based on a thorough diagnosis of its strengths and weaknesses. The plans to support the school's improvement are rigorous; monitoring arrangements are appropriate and success criteria are sharp. You have benefited from peer reviews from colleagues from across the trust, which have strengthened your self-evaluation further.
- Teaching is good and improving. It is clear that the range of external and internal training and development opportunities provided has brought about significant improvement across the school. Leaders utilise the expertise from practitioners from their partner school in the federation well, as well as from schools within the multi-academy trust.
- Subject leadership is becoming much more effective. Leaders of English, mathematics and of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability have collaborated well with colleagues in the federation to devise a coherent teaching programme in line with the new national curriculum. Assessment systems are simple, effective and well understood by staff and pupils. Pupils' assessments are moderated across the federation to ensure that the school's judgements about their attainment are accurate.
- In 2015, all pupils achieved expected standards in key stage 1 and in the early

years. At key stage 2, attainment was higher than the national average at levels 4 and 5 and an above-average proportion made the progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to make good progress this year; outcomes in mathematics continue to be a consistently strong feature of pupils' achievement.

- Teaching in the early years is effective. Staff have benefited from your expertise in this phase of the school. Plans to support children's development are appropriately rooted in a sound understanding of child development. Children are happy and cared for well. They make rapid progress from their different starting points. In 2015, every child reached a good level of development.
- Pupils conduct themselves extremely well in class and around the school. Their attitudes towards learning and towards one another are exemplary. This is testament to the school's strong ethos of care, support and tolerance. Pupils participate in school life eagerly and readily help others less able or less fortunate than themselves.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Year 1 and 2 tests last year showed that all pupils achieved the standard required. Reading is encouraged and pupils enjoy using the library and sharing their love of reading. Learning mentors in Year 6 support younger, more-reluctant readers.
- The trust has provided important support for new school leaders. It has kept sound oversight of the school's progress. The executive headteacher supports you well to monitor the school's work and its progress towards targets.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils exceeding age-related expectations in reading and writing across key stages 1 and 2 is increased
- governors' knowledge and understanding of the new school assessment system is strengthened
- targets for disadvantaged pupils are even more challenging to accelerate their progress further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Nottingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rutland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The lead inspector visited all classrooms with the headteacher, undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work and talked with pupils in class. The inspector also met with the headteacher, the school business manager and the executive headteacher. Meetings were held with the leader responsible for the use of the pupil premium, English and mathematics. A range of school documentation was evaluated, including the school's self-evaluation document, the improvement plan, pupils' assessment information, records of safeguarding incidents and leaders' monitoring activities. School policies were also scrutinised from the school's website. The lead inspector also met with a group of pupils formally and spoke with pupils informally during lunchtime. Members of the governing body were interviewed, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body together with the governor responsible for health and safety. The inspector took account of 35 responses from parents using the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including 12 free texts. In addition, 31 survey responses from pupils and 10 from staff were also considered.