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Mrs Mary Hirst
Headteacher
Saint John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy
Shenley Road
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Dear Mrs Hirst

Short inspection of Saint John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 May 2011.

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 has continued its trajectory of improvement, and there is no complacency. It is a vibrant learning environment where pupils are cared for, encouraged to excel and where everyone works closely together as a team. As a result, pupils work hard, behave well and make consistently good progress. In your role as a local leader of education, you are highly respected. You support other schools, both within the Corpus Christi Academy Trust and as a key member of the Affinity Teaching School Alliance. You visit these schools and, for example, give them help to improve their teaching, as well as assisting them with performance management of their staff. Your contribution to the high level of collaboration that exists within the trust is considerable.

You are well supported by your able deputy headteacher. Since his appointment in spring 2016, he has worked effectively with you to ensure that areas where outcomes are less strong are dealt with robustly. Like you, he has a clear understanding of the school's strengths, and is able to analyse skilfully the information on pupils' outcomes. He talks confidently and knowledgeably about where pupils are making the most progress, and where their gains are not as strong. Subject leaders check pupils' work, visit classes and discuss with pupils themselves how they are learning. Because of this, they have a comprehensive understanding of their subjects, and they give detailed reports to you and to the governing body.

Governors perform a most effective strategic role and are ambitious for the school to become outstanding as soon as possible. They rigorously challenge you and senior leaders to continue to improve pupils' outcomes, particularly where there are any undue variations. You are also well supported by the multi-academy trust. The trust facilitator visits the school regularly and provides you with accurate reports that enable leaders to take action and secure further improvements.

You have used a variety of information to arrive at a correct judgement that your school is a good one. However, your school development plan is not as effective as it could be. This is because the timescales for actions are not always precise. In addition, the arrangements for monitoring those actions are not always clear enough. As a result, there is a risk that some actions could take place later than they should do, or that you and governors are not able to evaluate fully their impact.

All those staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire believe that you treat them fairly, and with respect. Those who were present at the inspection of your predecessor school confirm that Saint John Fisher Academy has continued to improve. They are clear about the aims of the school, and all say that the school encourages its pupils to work hard, make progress that is at least good, and to behave well.

Last year, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who made the progress expected of them, and the proportion making more than this, was above the national average. Progress in reading has been significantly above the national average for two years. Information provided by you, and confirmed by books that I looked at during my visit, shows that pupils are continuing to make good progress in English and mathematics, in all key stages. The rate of progress in mathematics, which you have made a priority to address, has accelerated. You are aware that progress in writing is not yet as brisk. This is because, though pupils have improved their spelling and have high skills in grammar and punctuation, they do not always apply these when completing their writing across different subjects.

Much of the display work in your school reflects the school's religious values. For example, pupils make displays explaining how their faith encourages them to 'try to love others as I love myself'. These show how they then raise money for charities to help other children across the world who are less fortunate than they are. There is also a large amount of work displayed of pupils' impressive two- and three-dimensional art, along with examples of their writing. In one particularly notable display, a group of pupils from Saint John Fisher had visited the grave of Richard III. Pupils had written imaginative poems and impressive accounts of their findings.

Parents whose children attend Saint John Fisher justifiably hold the school in high regard. The school's recent questionnaire shows that the overwhelming majority of those who responded had very positive views of all aspects of the school and your leadership. A very large majority who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, at the time of the inspection also gave very positive views. Ninety-seven per cent of those who responded would recommend the school, with a very large majority agreeing that the school is well led and managed. Almost all say that

their child is taught well, and makes good progress as a result. All parents who responded say that the school keeps their child safe. One parent summed up the views of many others by saying, 'I cannot speak highly enough about the school. It has a real family atmosphere where both staff, parents and children all feel like they belong. The staff are excellent and are all loved by the children. The headteacher is the perfect role model and is respected by all'.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a clear culture of vigilance in the school in respect of all aspects of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and, as a result, are knowledgeable about the warning signs of a wide variety of forms of child abuse. Staff I met were fully aware of the school's procedures to report immediately any concerns they may have to you or your deputy headteacher. The sample of records I looked at show that you and your deputy headteacher make prompt and appropriate referrals to a variety of external agencies where this is needed, including social care. You ensure that staff are recruited safely and the school's single central register meets requirements.

Pupils I met during my visit told me unanimously that they felt very safe in your school. They say that bullying, including name-calling, is very rare indeed, because everyone stays good friends. If bullying does happen, staff sort it out quickly. Pupils know that they can approach any adult if they need help because they are worried about anything. Pupils I spoke with also told me how you and your teachers tell them about a wide range of risks to their safety, including when online. Year 6 pupils told me how they appreciate the school arranging a visit to a specialist project in Leicester that tells them how to minimise the dangers they may face when they become teenagers.

Inspection findings

- You are continuing to ensure that the school goes from strength to strength. You work closely with your senior leadership team and other staff, modelling the high expectations of pupils and the caring ethos of the school. As a result, teachers are effective in their roles and teaching assistants support them well in lessons.
- Subject leaders are ensuring that teaching and pupils' outcomes in their areas continue to improve. They also assist other, less confident, teachers in improvement. For example, the mathematics leader is helping her colleagues to introduce a new curriculum that is designed to promote pupils' mastery of mathematics.
- You have a clear knowledge about the strengths of the school and ensure that your staff attend to any areas where outcomes are not as good as they could be. For example, last year you noted that girls' outcomes were considerably better than those of boys in Reception. As a result, your teachers adjusted their planning. This gap is now narrowing considerably.
- Effective teaching begins in the Reception class, where children are encouraged to have a go and become actively involved across the curriculum. On the day of my visit, for example, children were learning how to perform first aid. They

were listening carefully and then practising keenly to demonstrate their new skills, using role-play with each other to show what they would do if they found someone unconscious. Children behaved sensibly and showed great care to each other. Pupils throughout the school demonstrate similar attitudes.

- Pupils listen carefully to what adults are teaching them, follow instructions immediately and know they must work hard in lessons. As a result, there is no learning time lost and pupils make good gains in all year groups. I saw no disengagement from learning at any time during my visit.
- Pupils' progress in both English and mathematics is good, and continues to improve. Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly below those typically found in children of the same age. By the time that they enter Year 1, most children have caught up quickly. The proportion of pupils who have attained a good level of development has been in line with the national average for the past two years and this year it is set to rise to around 80%.
- The teaching of phonics is very effective. As a result, the proportion of pupils passing the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been above the national average for three years. This year, results are expected to increase still further.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 and 2 is at least in line with national averages. Attainment at reading has been significantly above this for the past two years. You ensure that your pupils are keen readers who enjoy books for pleasure, as well as having high levels of skills in inferring and deducing meaning from texts.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils means that it is not possible to report on their outcomes over time at any key stage. However, these pupils make overall progress that is at least in line with, or greater than, others.
- Pupils also make good progress in modern foreign languages. You employ a specialist teacher, who also works at the local secondary school that many of your pupils go on to attend, to teach French from Year 3 onwards. Due to good teaching, pupils' writing and oral skills increase considerably as they get older.
- Pupils' written work shows clear evidence of good progress. For instance, in the Reception class children had learned to write simple sentences with mainly accurate letter formation and spelling. Children had written about a visit the class had recently made, with one child explaining, 'We went to Brocks Hill to hunt for minibeasts. We found a slug in the log. The frog jumped up and down.' By Year 4, pupils write striking poems using onomatopoeia with phrases such as 'the swishing of the trees, the buzzing of the bees'.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn, and attendance remains above the national average. As well as pupils' good attitudes to learning, pupils behave well around the school. They are polite to visitors and are very caring to each other, and respect greatly those who hold beliefs that are different to their own.
- While the school's funding agreement does not give details of what must be included on its website, the website contains a wide variety of useful information for parents.
- Governors ensure that procedures for appraisal are effective. Teachers receive challenging targets in respect of their classroom performance, and governors are unafraid to refuse any pay rise due unless this is justified. They also ensure that the site is safe and that leaders complete risk assessments appropriately.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing is accelerated to match that of reading and mathematics, checking that pupils consistently apply their skills in grammar and punctuation whenever they are writing
- the school development plan has clear timings for actions and states who will monitor each action, and precisely how.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

On the day of the inspection, you were unavailable due to being on jury service. Because of this, I met with your deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, representatives of the governing body and the subject leaders for English and mathematics. I visited a wide variety of classes to observe learning. I looked at pupils' work from different year groups across the school. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime, and met with groups of them at breaktime and in the afternoon. I considered the views of 31 parents posted on Parent View alongside the school's most recent questionnaire. I read a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, your school development plan and information on outcomes for pupils currently in the school. I visited the breakfast club, which is maintained by the governing body, to check that pupils were safe. I studied information related to attendance, anonymised examples of teachers' appraisal and examined safeguarding records and policies. I examined the school's website to investigate what information is available to parents online, and met with a representative of Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust. I looked at the range of views expressed by staff, through Ofsted's questionnaire, about the school and its leadership.