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Mr M Tipping
St Jude's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mr Tipping

Short inspection of St Jude's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 school was judged to be good in September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, you have been appointed as headteacher and other members of the school's leadership team are also new in post. The governing body has been reconstituted and several new governors recruited. The school is fully staffed, although some of your colleagues are on, or recently returned from, leave. A new nursery provision has been established at the school, and is due to open later this month.

Using these many changes, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have created a culture of high expectations and increased teachers' responsibility for the achievement of their pupils. Assessment information that staff collect about pupils' progress is now used to evaluate the impact of teaching and to check on the progress of some key groups of pupils. This information is used in regular discussions with teachers. Teachers know how they can use this information to support pupils.

You encourage and support the development of senior and middle leaders in the school, ensuring that there is capacity to further develop the school. You have established an outward-facing culture of leadership. As a result, your skills, and those of your colleagues, are shared with other schools through local networks. St Jude's benefits from the experience and expertise of leaders at other schools, for example, by making sure pupils' tests are marked consistently. Parents are very supportive of the changes you have brought about and see the benefits for their children. One comment identified 'a positive change in the way the school is being

run'. Staff are supportive of your work, proud to work at the school and identify improvement in the school since the last inspection.

Following the last inspection, senior leaders and governors were asked to further improve the quality of teaching by ensuring pupils are suitably challenged and move quickly onto new learning during lessons. Middle leaders now have increased responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The local authority's commissioned services have carried out leadership training, which has improved the skills and confidence of middle leaders in this aspect of their roles. Leaders' records show that teaching is consistently good across the school.

At the previous inspection, improving the attendance of pupils who are regularly absent from school was identified as a specific priority. Leaders and governors have taken action to address this, including: discussions between parents and governors, pupil rewards for better attendance and reminding parents (through school newsletters) of the link between good attendance and success at school. These actions have had a positive impact for some, and the number of pupils who achieve 100% attendance is increasing. Despite your best efforts, a small number of pupils continue to be persistently absent from school. Improving attendance remains a priority for leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a clear culture of safeguarding being a high priority in the school. The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff receive timely and appropriate training and information when key legislation and guidance are updated. They know how to ensure that pupils are safe and what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders' culture of looking outward from the school to other schools and agencies extends to safeguarding. Staff attend regularly safeguarding updates and networking events which help them to check the quality of the school's approaches and ensure pupils are kept safe. Children who are at risk are supported well by the school, and positive links to other organisations make sure that effective and timely support is put in place when it is needed.

Pupils say that they feel safe, and that there are always adults to talk to in school should they have any worries. They state that the school is a caring and friendly place, and that any instances of conflict between pupils are dealt with swiftly by adults and resolved. During this inspection, pupils gave a wide range of examples of how they learn about keeping themselves safe, including fire safety, traffic awareness and how they should respond if there was a stranger in school. I observed pupils learning about how to protect their identity online from someone they do not know. Staff feel confident that pupils are safe and well looked after when in school. Parents agree and also note that the school responds well to any concerns they may have. One parent said, 'Staff are keen to resolve things in a helpful manner.'

Inspection findings

- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance is highly accurate and objective. This allows them to focus strategic development on appropriate areas of the school. Leaders know what needs to improve further in order for the school to become outstanding.
- Since the governing body was reconstituted, governors have become more sharply focused on their responsibilities. Newly recruited governors enhance the skills available on the governing body. Training and development ensures governors are up to date and able to carry out their duties effectively. Governors have the skills to verify leaders' information and support and challenge them in equal measure. Governors are committed to maintaining the strengths of the school, and its culture and ethos.
- Leaders encourage scrutiny and challenge in order to validate their work in the school. A recent review of the school's performance by the local authority's commissioned services scrutinised the quality of leadership, pupil outcomes and other aspects of the school. Clear and sharply focused actions were identified and were then quickly acted upon by leaders and governors.
- Leaders have introduced successfully a school-wide system to record and track pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers use this information to inform how they plan and teach. Leaders analyse progress and attainment for some key groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, routine analysis does not take place for groups of pupils based on their different starting points. As a result, leaders are not fully aware of how effectively teaching is helping different ability groups, such as the most able pupils, in each class.
- Some new strategies are being introduced this year to improve outcomes for particular groups, such as the most able pupils, and to address differences in performance between boys and girls. As these initiatives are in their infancy, it is too soon for leaders to determine how effective they are, but pupils are very enthusiastic about these projects so far.
- Teachers use different types of questions particularly well in lessons. This encourages pupils to answer in detail, and to explain their responses. Particularly effective questioning was seen, during the inspection, in mathematics where pupils were explaining how different methods could be used to reach the correct solution. Teachers carefully checked that pupils understood each step, so that they were secure in knowing how they reached their answer rather than just whether it was correct.
- Additional support is offered where it is needed to build on the work pupils complete in class. These carefully planned interventions build on pupils' experiences and make sure that specific learning needs are met. For example, when reading together, the most able pupils discuss their shared texts in order to stimulate wide-ranging discussions. These discussions develop their knowledge and allow them to learn from each other.
- Staff in the early years quickly identify children's starting points. They make sure that, through appropriate activities and additional support, children develop quickly. Although many children begin school with low starting points, the proportion that achieves a good level of development is close to the national

figure and has increased over time. Differences in gender attainment exist, as a higher proportion of boys achieve a good level of development than girls.

- The standards attained by pupils at the end of key stage 1 have increased over time and, in 2015 were in line with, or above, national levels. School monitoring information indicates that there have been further improvements in 2016. Differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally have diminished over time and, currently, have almost disappeared.
- The proportions of pupils making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics from key stage 1 to key stage 2 have increased over time. However, rates of progress have improved more slowly for disadvantaged pupils and for girls.
- Standards have continued to improve at key stage 2. Attainment was above the national average for all pupils and many pupil groups in both 2014 and 2015. Boys' attainment was stronger than girls' during this time and much higher than the national average.
- Early analysis of information for 2016 shows strong rates of progress at the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics looks set to be above national figures. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics looks likely to be lower than national data, apart from in mathematics. Leaders will be able to validate their initial analysis once national results are confirmed later this year.
- The overall attendance of pupils continues to be just below, but close to, the national average. However, the absence rates for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are supported by the school, remain high. Staff continue to work to support individual pupils and their families to improve attendance rates.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress and attainment of pupils with different starting points is tracked and evaluated, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils
- the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent from school improves, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities and are supported by the school.

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

Rob Hackfath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection focused on specific key lines of enquiry about the progress of the most able pupils, differences in outcomes for boys and girls, how leaders are tackling persistent absence for particular groups of pupils and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. During the inspection, I met you and other senior leaders, including the designated lead for safeguarding in the school. I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority's commissioned services.

I joined you and the deputy headteacher in short visits to lessons where we spoke to pupils about their work and looked at the work in their books. I evaluated a range of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation and action plans, recent information on pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and other records about keeping pupils safe, their attendance and behaviour.

Pupils gave me their views about the school when they spoke to me during a formal meeting and in lessons. I also considered the views of pupils through the 55 responses to the online questionnaire. I took the views of school staff into account through the 21 responses to an inspection questionnaire for staff. The views of parents were considered through the 15 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and an analysis of a school parent survey that you provided.