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Mrs Gillian Deery
Headteacher
English Martyrs Catholic (Aided) Primary School
High Street
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Dear Mrs Deery

Short inspection of English Martyrs Catholic (Aided) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 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 December 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, staff and governors successfully promote the school's core values, 'Where everyone is special'. Good-quality displays of pupils' art work, independent writing, science investigations and information and communication technology (ICT) projects show how much staff and governors value pupils' efforts. Pupils' work and displays show improvements to the curriculum. Pupils use mathematics and ICT much more than previously, which was an area for improvement reported at the time of the school's previous inspection.

Evidence from pupils' books shows that leaders and staff have focused successfully on improving pupils' writing. The new handwriting policy is starting to have an impact on helping pupils to form their letters accurately when writing independently. However, in some classes, pupils' handwriting is uneven, so more is needed to achieve more consistency.

The vast majority of parents I spoke to and who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, are very pleased with the care and education provided by you and your staff team. Most parents would recommend the school to others.

You and the deputy headteacher provide strong leadership. Governance has improved well since the previous inspection as this was an area for improvement at that time. You have played a significant role in overseeing, with the chair of the

governing body, a restructuring of governors' roles and responsibilities. The governing body and its composition have changed a great deal since the previous inspection. Governors bring significant skills and experience to help leaders and staff sustain improvements to the school. Senior leaders, governors and staff with management and oversight of subjects or aspects of the school monitor teaching and learning regularly and effectively. This too is an improvement since the previous inspection, including the impact of intervention work to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The governing body provides a good balance of challenge and support to hold leaders and staff to account for pupils' achievements and staff performance. The teaching is good and pupils' achievements continue to improve because of effective monitoring of staff performance, accurate assessments of pupils' progress and significant improvements to the school's curriculum.

Leaders have managed some well-devised training, professional development and support that are helpful to teachers and support staff. As a result, teachers set consistent expectations for work and behaviour in lessons and teaching assistants provide more consistently effective support in lessons compared with that at the time of the previous inspection. Increasingly, you and your staff share best practice across the school and with other partner schools in your local consortium. However, some teaching does not provide enough challenge, particularly in mathematics. This slows the progress of those pupils who have the potential to reach high standards in mathematics or acquire knowledge at greater depth.

There is a strong commitment to improving pupils' academic and personal development. Leaders, staff and governors make an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is clearly evident in the religious character of the school through its Catholicity, as well as the enrichment offered to pupils through a broad range of activities, visits and experiences. You and the staff provide a rich variety of lessons, subjects, topics and extra-curricular enrichment that also reflect core British values of respect, tolerance and understanding of different faiths, cultures and customs. For example, pupils are currently preparing to commemorate Remembrance Day and, at the time of the inspection, were celebrating a Holy Day of Obligation, All Saints' Day, in the neighbouring church.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, effective and robust. Staff vetting procedures include systematic checks on all visitors, volunteers, governors and supply staff. The indoor and outdoor areas include a good range of stimulating resources and areas available for early years children are clean, safe and secure. Pupils know what to do to keep themselves safe when using the internet or mobile devices.

Risk assessments of school activities are carried out routinely. You and the governors make sure that safeguarding and child protection training for staff are carried out systematically. Effective checking systems are in place to ensure that staff carry out regular training and that they are aware of all national and local policies related to safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, to combat radicalisation and extremism.

Inspection findings

- This is a successful and inclusive school which embraces diversity and a respect for all children and families, whatever their backgrounds, cultures or circumstances. Nearly all the parents I spoke to were very pleased with the quality of education and high levels of care and attention you and your staff provide for their children.
- You and your staff put children first. You consult and involve pupils, which is reflected in your strong belief that, as you stated to me, 'The pupil voice is very important to us as a school'. In addition to helping pupils achieve well, your staff, leaders and governors make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education beyond key stage 2.
- Sharper monitoring by leaders and governors has sustained improvements to teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement is improving as a result and the teaching is good throughout the school and early years.
- Standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stages 1 and 2. Although improving, pupils reach standards in mathematics that are lower compared with those in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2. There is potential for more of the most able pupils to reach high standards in mathematics.
- Work books show that pupils in some classes, particularly the most able pupils, do too much consolidation of number skills before moving on to more challenging mathematics. Teachers do not always question or probe further to make sure that pupils use the most efficient methods of calculation, or check for gaps in pupils' understanding. However, there are early signs of improvement. The most recent national test results, although unvalidated for Year 6 in 2016, show that the proportion of the most able pupils reaching a high standard was above average.
- A great deal has been achieved since the previous inspection to raise standards in reading and writing. In the early years and key stage 1, pupils do particularly well in developing literacy skills. The teaching of phonics is very effective so that children recognise the combinations of letters when blending them to form words. The most able pupils, including the small number of disadvantaged most able pupils, achieve well. Effective support and intervention work enable pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to achieve well.

- You have rightly identified that there is still scope to improve the quality of pupils' handwriting as there is inconsistency or untidy handwriting in some classes. A good start has been made in the early years and key stage 1 having introduced a new handwriting scheme.
- Leaders and staff have reshaped the curriculum. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are energised by the range of work, visits, topics and enrichment experiences you and the staff provide. Significant improvements to the curriculum include more science and technology projects, as well as more number and mathematical work. For example, pupils in key stage 2 learn how to programme and build robotic devices using computers and construction toys. Some of this work is stunning and the quality remarkable.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is enhanced as they write thoughtful prayers, personal accounts and diaries. There are many opportunities for pupils to reflect on how they can contribute positively to their school and wider community.
- Pupils are keen to achieve well and are very interested and motivated learners. They show resilience and perseverance as they try hard and behave very well in and around school.
- Educational visits and visitors, drama, music and the creative arts are strong features of the school's curriculum. Sport, team games and after-school clubs enrich pupils' school experiences. Their enjoyment of school is also reflected in above-average attendance rates.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a continued focus on raising standards in mathematics
- teachers provide more challenging tasks and questions for pupils who have the potential to reach high standards in mathematics
- they build on the start made on improving pupils' handwriting by applying the school's handwriting policy consistently across classes.

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 Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the chair of the governing body. We visited classes together to observe some teaching, looked at pupils' work in books and spoke to pupils during lessons. I also spoke to pupils during lunchtime. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and considered the 28 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I scrutinised the school's improvement plan, monitoring files and assessments of pupils' work and progress. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures to determine whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

During this short inspection, I tested four lines of enquiry:

- the extent to which children in the early years and pupils in Year 1 make progress in early reading, writing and phonics
- the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in key stage 2 to see whether pupils make good progress and that the teaching expects enough of pupils
- the extent to which the school has improved its curriculum since its previous inspection in 2011
- the extent to which governance has improved since the previous inspection, and how well leaders monitor teaching and learning across the school.