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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Ms Mary Mainwaring
Headteacher
Christ The King Catholic Primary School, Thornbury
Easton Hill Road
Thornbury
Bristol
BS35 1AW

Dear Ms Mainwaring

Short inspection of Christ the King Catholic Primary School, Thornbury

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 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.

You are committed to the belief that all pupils are entitled to the best education, regardless of background or ability. This belief is shared by all staff at the school, reflecting the fact that you have developed an inclusive culture during your time as headteacher. In your words, 'the children are at the heart of our school'. Furthermore, you have high expectations of pupils and staff. This means that the school is a purposeful environment where learning drives everything that you and other staff do.

You have managed to create this school culture because you are well supported by senior leaders, middle leaders and governors. You have empowered other staff to take greater ownership of their work; they feel able to contribute their own ideas, work collaboratively and take risks. Governors carry out their roles effectively and with confidence because of the open relationship that exists between them and school leaders. This relationship ensures that governors are able to provide you with the right level of support and challenge. Senior leaders and governors know the school well. Consequently, you are able to tackle areas for improvement decisively because you have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The quality of teaching has improved because you have given responsibility to middle leaders to develop individual curriculum subjects. These leaders have given careful thought to what is taught and how it should be taught. Teachers, ably supported by other adults, set interesting and stimulating activities for pupils. Pupils engage with their learning because the tasks are inviting and challenge them to think. As one pupil I spoke to said, 'learning isn't just challenging, it's fun as well'. Moreover, because staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs and individual circumstances, activities and resources enable all pupils to make rapid progress from their different starting points.

As a result, pupils achieve well in most of their subjects. Achievement in reading is particularly strong by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils currently in the school, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language, are progressing well. However, leaders acknowledge that pupils throughout the school need to develop a greater mastery of mathematics.

Pupils enjoy their school experience. This is because they feel valued and encouraged to succeed. Pupils share warm, supportive relationships with staff. In addition, their good work is celebrated and they enjoy a range of sporting and artistic opportunities outside lessons.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions taken to improve phonics, and the achievement of certain groups of pupils in different subjects. We also considered the effectiveness of actions to improve attendance for different groups of pupils and whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is taken seriously by staff in the school. The open, nurturing and inclusive culture that leaders have fostered means that pupils feel comfortable speaking up if anything is troubling them. Pupils I spoke to said that they would be happy to speak to any member of staff if they were worried. Leaders and governors make a point of speaking to pupils about whether they feel safe. This ensures that pupils are heard and have the chance to make suggestions. Pupils have the maturity and insight to understand what safe behaviour is, so that they are orderly and respectful of each other around the school.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online. For example, they know that passwords need to be protected and that they should not share personal information.

The checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children are thorough and comprehensive. All staff, volunteers and governors receive the appropriate training, including in the 'Prevent' duty. Staff and governors understand the

procedures for making referrals about a child's welfare should they be concerned. The school site is secure, with suitable fencing and gates that are locked at appropriate times during the school day.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' self-evaluation is very thorough. As a result, you are clear about whether groups of pupils and individuals are underperforming. You take swift action to understand the contextual reasons for underperformance so that you can put in place the most effective support.
- Leaders have already started to take action to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics, particularly for lower attaining pupils. You acknowledge that pupils need to deepen their mathematical understanding. Although pupils are provided with many opportunities to practise their calculation skills, they are not developing mathematical reasoning to the same extent.
- You are well supported by the school improvement adviser. This is because the adviser knows the school well, which has enabled her to target her support in the most effective ways.
- The high number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported; so, too, are those who speak English as an additional language. A high level of support is also in place for Traveller pupils and their families. Skilled teaching assistants are deployed effectively to help these pupils. Pupils also benefit from the well-planned tasks and activities that enable them to make good progress. Pupils feel proud of their efforts because their achievements are celebrated. This inspires them to try harder.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make strong progress, particularly in reading and writing. Work in their books shows that they are set challenging tasks and are provided with many opportunities to practise technical writing skills. This means that pupils are able to write persuasively at length, structure their work cogently and write for different purposes and audiences.
- The feedback provided by teachers encourages pupils of all abilities to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their work. They are prompted to edit their mistakes and re-draft work in the light of improvements.
- All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, strive for high standards of presentation. This is because leaders have made presentation and the pride pupils take in their work a high priority. As a result, pupils practise neat handwriting and lay their work out correctly in all their books for different subjects.
- Pupils' achievement in phonics is improving. Progress is often slow at first because many children join the school in the early years with high levels of need or are new to learning English. Leaders have put in place appropriate support to boost these children's reading skills. As a result, achievement in the Year 2 phonics screening check is in line with the national average. Pupils make strong progress in their reading as they move through the school. Consequently, by the

end of Year 6, their achievement is high in comparison with the national average.

- The pupils who read to me were enthusiastic because they enjoyed the books they had chosen. Pupils persisted with texts that were sometimes challenging because they had the resilience and phonetic tools necessary to read difficult or unfamiliar words. For example, a less able reader was able to read the words 'frequently' and 'particularly' after breaking them down into smaller 'chunks.'
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average overall. It has been consistently above average over time. However, attendance for some Traveller pupils is below average. Leaders are working hard to address this issue, with partial success. For example, you have been rightly persistent in trying to secure school transport for some of these pupils.
- All parents who responded to the Parent View online survey agree that their children are happy, safe and well looked after in school. The vast majority also agree, many strongly so, that pupils are well taught, make good progress and that the school is well led and managed. Nearly all parents would recommend the school.

Next steps for the school

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teaching continues to develop pupils' mastery of mathematics throughout the school, in order to raise achievement in this subject.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you and other senior leaders, pupils, representatives of the governing body and the school improvement adviser.

You and I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. The work in pupils' books was also scrutinised and I listened to pupils read.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, attendance information and child protection records. I also considered minutes for the meeting of the governing body.

In addition, I took account of 60 responses to the Parent View online survey, 28 responses to the staff survey and 47 responses to the pupil survey issued during the inspection.