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Mrs Charlotte Targett  
St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Targett

### **Short inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Marnhull**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017, 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 September 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have worked tirelessly to create a team of staff who support effectively the diverse needs of the pupils. The majority of staff are new to the school and have played an important part in evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses and identifying the improvements necessary. Now, the school is going from strength to strength to help pupils achieve their maximum potential.

Staff, with your guidance, have built on the recommendations from the previous inspection. Pupils' work is presented well in their books. Pupils show a pride in what they are doing and engage in learning from mistakes, so their progress is continual. The most able pupils are starting to be more successful in their learning, especially mathematics, but you know that there is more to do in this area. The new leader of mathematics has trained teachers in the new curriculum and given them confidence in areas in which they felt less secure. Pupils are gaining from the better teaching. They are learning to articulate their understanding of mathematics verbally and in writing. There has been a successful session for parents where the children explained the mathematical concepts they were learning in class. This was so well received that the parents have asked for another to take place. Pupils' mental mathematical skills are developed well, adding to pupils' developing skills. Practical equipment is available and used well in classrooms. Numeracy is developed across

the curriculum and applied in practical ways. This was evident in the London's Burning project, where pupils re-enacted the Great Fire of London and the emergence of the bubonic plague. Pupils were calculating costs, weighing materials and charging fares as well as a host of other activities that strengthened their mathematical application.

The balance between necessary nurture for young children and academic achievement is understood well by you, staff and governors. This influences the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils, which is a strength of the school. The Catholic ethos pervades the school in a variety of ways, visually and physically as well as educationally and emotionally. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Older pupils understand the fundamental British values of democracy and the rule of law. They practise them within the school council and as ambassadors for the school.

Pupils look forward to coming to school every day. One parent confirmed my view when commenting that her children 'have made such amazing progress' because 'they feel happy and safe.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that pupils are safe and secure in the school at all times. You have raised expectations with regard to safeguarding practices and supported staff in having a better understanding of how to assess risks consistently. This has created a strong culture of safety. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and child protection records are detailed and of high quality. The safeguarding policy is up to date and very comprehensive. The most recent Department for Education guidelines are on the website, which has all the required information about safeguarding. Staff have been suitably trained in the most recent changes to safeguarding procedures. Governors have noted an improvement in the support from Plymouth Catholic and Anglican Schools Trust, the multi-academy trust of which St Mary's is part, in the past two months, and this has improved practices for safeguarding.

### **Inspection findings**

- The individual needs of pupils are now better understood because of the closer monitoring taking place. You hold regular pupil progress meetings with teachers where the entire population of the school is discussed. Staff are clearer about the particular barriers to pupils' learning and act upon them currently or prepare for them in the future. The impact of extra support is evaluated constantly. Consequently, pupils are making better progress.
- Teaching assistants, as well as teachers, are trained so that they can deliver phonics coaching and interventions in mathematics well. This provides extra opportunities for pupils to catch up if they are falling behind in their learning.
- Governors work closely with the school. They support and challenge the headteacher, which has made recent progress more rapid. Governors have a suitable skill set which is being used very effectively, such as being able to

analyse strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. This informed governors' priorities to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics in key stage 2.

- New initiatives in reading have been introduced. Pupils read books to teachers, and each other, more frequently and with better understanding. The new leader of literacy has evaluated well the areas that need to be improved. One of these was the understanding of progress that is made at key stage 1 in vocabulary and grammar development. Teachers of pupils in key stage 2 observed the work of teachers in key stage 1, and this has raised expectations accordingly. Now, pupils in key stage 2 are working at greater depth, particularly with comprehension skills. They have not developed more sophisticated punctuation yet. Teachers know that pupils' vocabulary needs to be extended further.
- Opportunities for extended writing are provided in a range of subjects, not just English. Pupils are applying their grammatical skills in different types of writing, and this is preparing them fittingly with the skills necessary for life beyond school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have been made more aware of the different teaching methods required for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Individualised strategies are used and assessed frequently, and pupils are making better progress.
- Systems to make sure pupils are attending regularly have been strengthened. The majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who were not attending as well as others are now coming to school every day.
- The needs of the disadvantaged pupils are analysed in great detail, and the barriers to their learning are understood well by all staff. Provision is in place for individual pupils and is checked regularly to see if it is helping the pupil's work to improve. As a result, these pupils are making very good progress and, often, better progress than the other pupils.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged:

- are provided with challenges that deepen their thinking and reasoning more proficiently in mathematics
- write at greater depth by having a secure knowledge of the more sophisticated aspects of punctuation and use of a wider range of vocabulary
- develop their reading skills further, particularly pupils' ability to infer meaning from the texts they read.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The key lines of enquiry were to investigate how effective leaders and governors are at ensuring that:

- the quality of teaching is improving outcomes in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2
- the quality of teaching is improving outcomes in literacy at key stages 1 and 2
- the most vulnerable, disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend and achieve across the school
- safeguarding practices are secure in the school.

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is part of the Plymouth Catholic and Anglican Schools Trust. The Trust was formed in April 2014. The work of the Trust is overseen by a board of directors. The Trust is responsible for: one nursery; one first school; 32 primary schools; and two secondary schools across seven local authorities in the south west region.

During the inspection, I met with you, subject leaders, governors, staff, pupils and the area adviser for the trust. I visited lessons for all classes in the school. I looked at the quality of the work in pupils' exercise books. I considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. I took into account 36 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 15 comments written by parents.