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20 February 2017

Mrs Sarah Power  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Power

### **Short inspection of St Catherine's CofE (VC) Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 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 have successfully led the school through a period of significant change and development. Since the last inspection the school has moved into a new, purpose-built building. You have ensured that this is a bright and stimulating place that promotes pupils' learning across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils now benefit from learning in classrooms that are well resourced, and enjoy the opportunities to play and learn in the outside areas. You have ensured that pupils have access to a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, including tablet computers. Teachers are skilled at ensuring that these are used well to support the pupils' learning.

You have built up strong and positive relationships with parents and carers and, as a result, parental confidence in all aspects of the school's work is exceptionally high. All the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, stated that they felt their children were well looked after and were well taught. The comment of one parent that, 'Mrs Power is a wonderful headteacher. She is approachable, understanding and puts the needs of the child first. I love the fact that she is always visible and around for parents,' was typical of the views of an overwhelming majority of parents who submitted free text comments during the inspection. The school is now oversubscribed and highly regarded in the local community. There is a strong feeling in the school that it is like a family, with all members of the

community valued and respected. This was reflected in the views of pupils who were spoken to during the inspection, with one child commenting that, 'The school is full of smiley faces and people can't feel down.'

You have further strengthened leadership in the school. The appointments of the deputy headteacher, shortly after the last inspection, and three middle leaders who have responsibility for different year groups within the school, have helped to create a strong and committed leadership team with shared values.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning have been increased. Older pupils are now involved in enterprise projects where they apply a range of curriculum skills to developing and marketing their own products. Pupils are now provided with good opportunities to apply their mathematics and ICT skills across a range of other subjects.

You, together with other leaders, are not afraid to take risks if you believe that this will benefit the pupils in the school. You have reviewed teachers' workload and have made pragmatic decisions about how teachers respond to pupils' work and how planning is carried out. This enables teachers to more closely focus on pupils' learning in the classrooms. You have recently introduced a revised system of assessment that is closely matched to pupils' outcomes across the curriculum. The assessment system is not yet fully embedded. You recognise that for it to be fully effective you need to use the information that it provides to set challenging progress targets for all pupils.

You have ensured that there are good systems in place to support teachers' professional development. Middle leaders work alongside their colleagues, demonstrating and sharing highly effective teaching. All leaders are highly reflective and look to identify how outstanding practice in other schools can be used to further develop the work of the school. You have sought out advice from external consultants and have determined how this can be applied at St Catherine's CofE Primary School.

Governors offer strong levels of challenge and support to school leaders. They use their professional expertise well to compare how the school is doing against other schools nationally. They recognise that some pupils, especially the most able, could achieve higher outcomes.

Pupils are well behaved and caring individuals. They appreciate the opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as being representatives on the school council or members of the eco council.

Where teaching is less effective you have taken strong and decisive action which has brought about the necessary improvements. Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and plans for improvement are well considered and appropriate to the needs of the school. You have rightly identified that while there have been improvements in the teaching of mathematics, there are still too few opportunities

for pupils to apply their skills and knowledge in problem-solving using reasoning.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders are proactive in ensuring that there are robust procedures in school to ensure that pupils are safe and protected. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are well trained and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and procedures for reporting any concerns. Teachers and other staff have received recent training in relation to child sexual exploitation, combatting extremism and the threat of radicalisation, and female genital mutilation. Systems for reporting and recording concerns are rigorous and help to ensure that support is provided quickly and appropriately for any vulnerable pupils. This helps to create a climate where safeguarding pupils is at the heart of the school's work. There are strong systems in place to ensure that staff appointed to the school do not pose any threat to pupils' safety and well-being. There are very effective induction procedures in place to ensure that newly appointed staff have a deep and comprehensive understanding of the school's expectations regarding safeguarding. The school's safeguarding officer is particularly effective in ensuring that all statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are fully in place.

### **Inspection findings**

- School leaders have identified how mathematics teaching can be improved through analysis of outcomes of outstanding practice in other schools. There is a strong focus on ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of computation and arithmetic skills. Teachers ensure that pupils are enabled to use structured apparatus to support them in their learning and to visualise concepts. Opportunities for application of mathematics across other subjects are supported through topic work, including science, geography and art. While teachers are developing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge in problem-solving using reasoning, this is not consistently applied in sufficient depth across all classes. The challenge for the most able pupils is not consistently high enough in mathematics and other subjects. Some teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what these pupils can and should achieve.
- ICT is now used extremely well across the curriculum. There has been a significant financial investment by school leaders in purchasing new, high-quality resources. Pupils use tablet computers to support and enhance their learning across all subject areas and produce work of a high quality. For example, during the inspection pupils were seen using tablet computers to take pictures of themselves before drawing a self-portrait. Other examples were seen of pupils producing electronic booklets related to religious education and history studies. Pupils are encouraged to consider and make informed decisions about when the use of ICT is appropriate. ICT is also well used to support the learning of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The teaching of early reading is good. There is a whole-school, systematic approach to the teaching of phonics from when children start in Reception and upwards. Children in Reception classes receive daily phonic lessons and are

encouraged to use their developing knowledge of sounds to write words in sentences. Pupils develop a love of reading as they move through the school and are fluent readers by the time they leave in Year 6. Teachers also focus correctly on ensuring that pupils' understanding of what they have read is strong.

- Leaders have a clear and detailed knowledge of the needs of all the disadvantaged pupils in school. Support is planned and delivered to meet their specific needs. Funding is maximised by training staff, especially teaching assistants, to a high level so that they can lead tailored interventions. For example, additional support is put in place to develop pupils' reading skills, including small group and one-to-one phonic sessions. The recently implemented assessment system is proving more effective in identifying the progress that individual pupils and groups of pupils are making. However, it is not yet embedded and consequently is not yet being used fully to set ambitious progress targets for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in school is highly effective. It is well led by a member of the school's senior leadership team. A specialist teaching group is in place each morning for a small group of pupils with the most profound needs. This helps these pupils to fully access their learning and also is very well devised to support the pupils' complex emotional and behavioural needs. As a result, these pupils are able to participate fully in school life and make good progress. Interventions and one-to-one support are used well to enable other pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress in all areas of the curriculum. Additional funding is used in highly effective ways, including through the employment of a specialist mathematics teacher, and support from outside agencies, including an educational psychologist and an occupational therapist.
- The school ethos is based on showing respect for other people. The promotion of fundamental British values, such as tolerance and the rule of law, is built into pupils' learning. Regular assemblies focus on specific values such as unity and mutual respect. One pupil's comment that, 'Assemblies remind us not to judge other people's faiths,' was typical of the view of many of the pupils. Pupils develop a good understanding of governance in this country through elections to the school council and visits from the local Member of Parliament.
- Visits to different places of worship, including a Sikh gurdwara, help to broaden pupils' understanding of other faiths and prepare them well for life in a multicultural and multi-faith society. Pupils' cultural development is supported very well, including through an annual visit from the 'Pearl of Africa' choir, with pupils enthusiastically experiencing dancing, drumming and singing.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what the most able pupils can and should achieve, and set tasks that are suitably challenging
- the recently introduced assessment systems are rapidly embedded to ensure that

monitoring of pupils' outcomes is used to set clear and ambitious progress targets

- teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge in problem-solving using reasoning.

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

Yours sincerely

Adam Hewett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a middle leader. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I considered the 79 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and looked at free text comments from parents. I visited, together with you and the deputy headteacher, seven classes to observe learning. I listened to some pupils read. I met with a group of pupils and also spoke with pupils in lessons. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime on the playground.

I scrutinised information about pupils' progress during the last academic year. I considered other documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school improvement plan. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including policies and checks on staff employed in the school, and checked the school website. I also analysed the range of views expressed by staff through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school and its leadership.

During this inspection I focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. These were:

- how successfully teachers ensure that pupils apply their mathematical and information and communication technology skills across other subjects
- the action that school leaders have taken to improve reading outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in school, especially in reading in key stage 1
- how leaders and teachers ensure that learning activities and support accurately match the needs of different abilities within school, especially the most able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and show respect and understanding for people with different faiths and beliefs.