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Mrs Mary Cummings
Headteacher
St Elphin's (Fairfield) CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School
Farrell Street
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Dear Mrs Cummings

Short inspection of St Elphin's (Fairfield) CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit on 21 March 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. You continue to lead the school effectively. There is a strong sense of teamwork, clear purpose and determination of staff and governors to make sure that every pupil achieves their best. You act decisively to address underachievement. This is demonstrated well by the action taken to improve outcomes in phonics after a dip in 2016. The employment of an additional teacher is helping all pupils, and particularly disadvantaged ones, to improve their skills and achievement in reading.

As headteacher, you have the respect of governors, pupils, staff and parents who praise your dedication and determination to improve the school. The local authority draws on your expertise to support headteachers new in post.

You have effectively tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Teaching is now consistently good across the school. Pupils and teachers told me that lessons are very rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Your own evaluation of the quality of the school's work is accurate. You have correctly identified the need to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards across the board in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. One reason for lower outcomes is that more pupils than average leave or join the school during the year. Much school time has had to be given to helping

pupils to catch up on missed learning. You have taken decisive action to improve the lower outcomes in 2016. The next step for the school is to increase the proportion of pupils at the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. The school also still needs to tackle low attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Your teaching team is strong. In the Ofsted questionnaire, and in conversations with teachers, many staff praised the quality of professional development that they receive and also the strong mutual support of other teachers. Many stated that they feel privileged and proud to work at St Elphin's.

You provide a rich curriculum which excites and enthuses pupils, and leads to strong personal and social development. Your pupils have many opportunities to develop leadership skills – for example, as members of the sports council, school council or as 'eco-warriors'. Your pupils are generous in their support of others, for example through links with a school in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. Your 'young interpreters' scheme means that pupils develop confidence in speaking languages such as Bulgarian, Portuguese, Spanish, Latvian, Polish, Hindi and many more. This ensures that pupils new to the school can be greeted in their own language and instantly feel welcome.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors share a commitment to keeping pupils safe. Your arrangements for safeguarding are meticulous and highly effective. You work successfully with other agencies to minimise the possibility of harm to any pupil. Staff told me that they receive regular and high-quality safeguarding training to keep them well informed. They feel that they know how to act in a range of different circumstances. You carefully evaluate the risks involved when pupils take part in different activities. You are assiduous in ensuring that staff recruitment is conducted safely.

Pupils were very confident that they are well looked after and can share any worries they might have with an adult. They described their school as a happy and safe place. They were especially appreciative of your well-being and attendance mentor and your safeguarding coordinator. They said that these staff are always available to listen and give good advice. Pupils told me confidently that they understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations. I was especially impressed by their awareness of the dangers to avoid when using the internet and social media. Your pupils have benefited from their research into how to keep safe when using the internet and have developed a child-friendly version of 'flag it, zip it, block it' from 'child alert'.

Leaders and governors ensure that arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality. Weekly safeguarding meetings ensure that staff are constantly vigilant and alert to any concerns. Your safeguarding meetings are often observed by the chair of the governing body.

Inspection findings

- You and your staff give a very high priority to making sure that attendance is at least at national levels and that the number of pupils with low attendance is reduced. You take a very firm stance with parents, making sure that they recognise that it is a legal requirement to send their children to school. You are equally firm in emphasising the importance of punctuality, and give top tips for how to make sure that children arrive at school in time and with the right equipment for the day.
- Pupils told me how much they enjoy the regular rewards for good attendance.
- They particularly like the attendance race track where classes can take part in a race with a reward for the highest attendance at the end of each half term. The new 'Elphy Bear' is a trophy eagerly competed for each week. You have introduced many strategies to help pupils and families, such as a breakfast club and HERO rewards for pupils ('Here, Every day, Ready, On time') Your well-being and attendance mentor supports effectively pupils and families who have lower rates of attendance with the result that the number of pupils who are regularly absent has reduced this year.
- You are determined to raise standards in reading so that all pupils learn to read well. You have increased the time that younger pupils spend on phonics, and make sure that pupils read often and hear adults reading well almost every day. Classrooms and corridors are filled with enticing displays of books. Despite these efforts, standards remain just below average and a few pupils are still reluctant readers.
- Pupils are becoming more confident in developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics. They enjoy the many strategies to help them visualise problems and abstract concepts. You have introduced daily active mathematics sessions in all classes. This innovative and creative strategy combines mathematics with physical activity. It is having a positive impact by engaging pupils and building their confidence, particularly in mental mathematics.
- When I looked at the work in pupils' mathematics books, I saw that specific groups of pupils have work set at the right level. Pupils of different abilities are set different tasks tailored to their specific needs. You and your staff have invested in better resources so that tasks are stimulating and enjoyable. It is clear that middle-ability pupils are making good progress this year.
- You and your staff are working effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in reading writing and mathematics. Your support for disadvantaged pupils includes social, emotional and mental support as well as academic support. Your pupil premium champion oversees the progress and achievement of disadvantaged pupils, analyses the outcomes of different strategies and makes sure that funds are used to the best effect. The governing body is very

aware of its responsibility to challenge the school to do as much as it can to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This, rightly, remains a key focus for the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the attendance, progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils further improve
- the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics increases by the end of Year 6.

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

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During my visit I met with you, your deputy headteacher and four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with several members of staff, including your special needs and safeguarding coordinators, and your attendance and well-being mentor. I spoke to a member of the local authority school improvement team. I met with a group of parents and looked at the survey results from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I reviewed the staff comments on the Ofsted questionnaire as well as speaking to many members of staff. Together, you and I visited active mathematics sessions and looked closely at pupils' workbooks in mathematics across the school. I met with a group of Year 6 pupils to hear their views. I listened to nine pupils of different ages and abilities reading, and talked to them about their progress in reading. I reviewed your current assessment system and data which tracks pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. I especially looked at the progress of disadvantaged pupils. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation and school development priorities. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements and your work to ensure the regular attendance of your pupils.