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Mrs Nikki O'Dwyer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs O'Dwyer

Short inspection of Our Lady and St Oswald's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school 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 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.

Since your appointment in January this year, you have demonstrated your resolve to step up the momentum of improvement. You lost no time in determining your own pertinent priorities. You welcome challenge and know complacency is not an option. You lead with conviction and have clearly communicated your expectations. You quickly established where specific developments were necessary. Nevertheless, as the survey of staff revealed, you have 'elicited staff's ideas and input'. Your rigorous improvement plans are informed by measurable targets so that governors can evaluate the effectiveness of your actions. You are supported by an excellent acting assistant headteacher whose energetic enthusiasm reinforces the message that the leadership team will not dally.

Pupils at Our Lady and St Oswald's are happy, enthusiastic and well cared for. Pupils and parents appreciate the 'family atmosphere' where pupils can speak openly about their preferences or worries. Pupils settle quickly to their lessons and are keen to demonstrate their understanding, knowledge and ideas. They know the daily routines and are keen to do well. Pupils enjoy a range of after-school activities and visitors. During the inspection, Year 6 were enjoying a week-long residential educational visit.

You are the third headteacher to be appointed since the last inspection in November 2011. Nevertheless, your predecessors lost no time in addressing the improvements identified at the last inspection. The priorities included developing boys' reading and writing and improving the communication between the school and parents. Leaders ensured that reading materials and topics were better suited to boys' interests. As a result, boys discovered a valuable source of interest in books which encouraged them to write for a variety of purposes and adopt a range of styles.

Leaders introduced opportunities for parents to discuss their concerns and organised events so that parents could learn how to support their children at home. Governors too, have done much to link with parents to improve regular and purposeful communication. Since your appointment you have introduced weekly newsletters, regular meetings and online questionnaires. In addition, you have invited parents to contribute to ongoing school improvement.

You have rightly identified the need to deepen staff's subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, and raise expectations for pupils' achievement. The acting assistant headteacher who is responsible for mathematics returned in January after a long absence. She quickly established her high level of subject knowledge and energetic enthusiasm for improvement. She received and shared appropriate training. All teachers are now required to explain clearly what it is that pupils will learn in each lesson and what pupils will do to demonstrate what they have learned. As a result, pupils are beginning to understand exactly what is expected of them, why they need to practise certain skills and how they can further improve. The continued development of staff's subject knowledge remains a priority for further improvement.

You are keen to identify and develop individual teachers' strengths to distribute leadership responsibilities more widely. You have correctly identified the need for those staff in receipt of upper pay scales to take on appropriate levels of responsibility.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, staff and governors are committed to keeping children safe. The school's principles for creating a genuinely caring school are embedded in your well-communicated ethos and values. Pupils look out for each other. You train older pupils to care for younger children and provide 'worry boxes' so that pupils can privately share their concerns. Staff explained, 'children can't learn if they feel unsafe.'

You have ensured that the procedures for reporting incidents or concerns are suitably detailed and precise. You maintain close contact with relevant external agencies who work with pupils and their families. In addition, you have established close links with the local pre-school setting and secondary school to ensure shared information and continuous support. All staff receive the required training and regular updates for safeguarding children.

All checks on staff, visitors, premises and planned activities are appropriate, stored securely and regularly updated.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in all subjects was broadly in line with the national figures in 2016. However, fewer pupils achieved the standard at greater depth in mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Following your appointment you and the acting assistant headteacher quickly identified that teachers' subject knowledge was less secure in mathematics than in other subjects. The assistant headteacher provided training to raise staff's expectations of pupils' progress and attainment. She ensured that teachers understand the age-related expectations for all pupils. In addition, she helped all staff to plan the necessary small steps in pupils' learning for them to gain the longer-term goals. She checks how well pupils are taught, how accurately they are assessed, and how well teachers' lesson plans are informed by ongoing pupils' progress.
- The sharpened focus on deepening pupils' understanding of mathematics has 'brought joy back to teaching and learning mathematics.' Pupils are beginning to show their enthusiasm for the subject and even look forward to the Friday tests to demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, you are right to focus on further securing teachers' subject knowledge. They are not yet confident to accurately and independently assess pupils' progress within lessons to inform specific and well-targeted short-term plans. In addition, they are at an early stage of understanding how the subject is developed to ensure pupils' deeper understanding.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-planned and specific support. All teachers, teaching assistants and the learning mentor contribute to setting realistic targets for individual pupils. These targets clearly indicate measurable expectations of pupils within set timeframes. They are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that support is tailored to their specific needs. Parents receive regular up-to-date feedback about their children's progress and are offered advice on how best to support them at home. Parents and pupils contribute to all reviews and plans for future support. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress within the standards expected for their age.
- The attendance of a small number of disadvantaged pupils fell below the national average last year. You closely investigate and monitor all incidents of attendance which fall below national figures. You work closely with parents and where necessary, the education welfare officer, to carefully analyse the reasons for absence and how families might be better supported. Persistent absence is appropriately challenged.
- Pupils cover a broad range of science topics over each year. Work in pupils' books shows that they learn and develop science skills such as careful observation and investigation. Pupils conduct controlled experiments and record their findings with accuracy. They study topics in great detail over time so they make predictions, draw conclusions, and raise further questions. Pupils are very

well prepared in science for the next stage in their education at secondary school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, continues to strengthen so that they are better able to
 - assess pupils' day-to-day progress to inform specific and well-targeted short-term plans
 - ensure an increasing number of pupils achieve the standard of greater depth
- the leadership capacity of the school, including those staff on upper pay scales, is further developed and distributed.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I was accompanied by Patrick Amieli, Ofsted Inspector, to observe the inspection. I met with you, the acting assistant headteacher responsible for mathematics and the coordinator for English. I also met the school improvement adviser, the chair of the governing body and a governor representative. We observed parts of lessons together, spoke to pupils and looked at their work. I considered responses from the survey of staff. I took account of the school's self-evaluation and your updated school development plan. I considered pupils' standards and historical and current rates of pupils' progress. I read various school policies including those for safeguarding, child protection, curriculum and behaviour. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.