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Mrs Lisa Kelly
Headteacher
St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School
Calve Croft Road
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Dear Mrs Kelly

Short inspection of St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Pupils' broad smiles, warm handshakes and eagerness to talk to visitors, signal their pleasure in belonging to St Elizabeth's. They are proud to be part of the warm and loving community you have created. Pupils have few complaints about their school experience. They bask in the positive relationships they have with each other and the adults in school. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and have nothing but praise for their teachers who make learning enjoyable. Pupils behave well and strive to do their best.

All of the parents I spoke with, and almost all who completed Parent View, share the same high levels of satisfaction as your pupils. They are overwhelmingly positive about every aspect of school life.

You and your team have successfully built on the many strengths inspectors identified when they visited your predecessor school in 2013. Pupils benefit from good teaching on a daily basis and achieve well. Children thrive in the early years and are well prepared for Year 1. Standards in Year 2 have risen over time due to the strong progress that pupils make across key stage 1.

Year 6 pupils are confident, assured and well equipped to meet the demands of

secondary school. By the time they leave St Elizabeth's, pupils are well rounded socially, personally and academically. They are set up well to become valuable citizens in modern Britain. This is also true for disadvantaged pupils. They achieve as well as other pupils in the country and have the same chance to prosper.

The inspection of your predecessor school identified the achievement of the most able pupils as a relative weakness. You have tackled this shortcoming in earnest. In fact, the gains made by the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is now a strength of the school. These pupils excel in reading, writing and mathematics. They do as well as other pupils nationally who have the same high starting points.

You have made the move to academy status seamlessly. The local governing board, under the watchful eye of trust directors, has grown in confidence and expertise. Governors make a valuable contribution to the work of the school, through the support and challenge they offer to you and other leaders. The considerable turnaround of staff in recent years has not held you back. Change has been planned carefully and managed sensitively. Staff have the utmost confidence in your strong leadership. Morale is high across your united team, because you nurture and support everyone to be the best. You, your team and the governing body all demonstrate strong capacity to take the school onto the next stage of its journey.

Whole-school approaches to teaching are understood by all and followed to the letter. Your checks on teaching mean that you know teachers' strengths and weaknesses well. You can step in, and offer support, at the first sign of anyone struggling. You have embraced the rich opportunities to work with other schools within your multi-academy trust and the local authority. Consequently, teachers benefit from high-quality training, which keeps their teaching techniques fresh and up to date.

Although there is much to celebrate at St Elizabeth's, my visit also uncovered a couple of relatively weaker areas. These revolve around pupils' attendance, the reliability of school data and the quality of science teaching across the school. My findings did not come as a surprise to you. Your well-crafted improvement plan indicates you are already on your way to tackling these shortcomings.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Keeping children safe sits at the heart of the school's work. It is given a high priority and you take a rigorous approach. Staff are trained well to spot signs that may indicate that pupils are suffering harm or neglect. Your meticulous and detailed record-keeping shows that staff are not afraid to share any worries they may have. Consequently, pupils are safe, happy and free to enjoy their days in school and at home.

Your strategies for keeping pupils safe are enhanced through the support you receive from a trained professional in the world of social care. Her expertise ensures that concerns are followed up quickly and support for pupils and their families are

secured swiftly.

Pupils are confident that staff respond well to occasional bouts of nastiness or name-calling. They feel free from bullying. Good use of external expertise means that pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- The 2016 results indicate that pupils achieve well overall, especially in mathematics and reading. In contrast, pupils' gains in writing were relatively weaker than usual. You have taken swift and effective action to tackle this weakness. An overhaul of teaching strategies is proving to be very successful in accelerating pupils' progress in writing. Pupils' writing books, across different classes and for different ability groups, tell a good story. Current pupils are making strong gains in their writing skills. They are becoming accomplished writers who produce technically accurate and creative work which more than meets the expectations for their age.
- Boys fared less well in 2016. However, now they are enjoying writing as much as girls. There is little difference in the quality of work they produce or in their achievement according to the school's tracking information. The gender gap is no longer a marked feature in school.
- The less able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do very well in mathematics by the end of Year 6. This is due to the small-group support and expert teaching they receive. However, they struggled to keep up in reading and writing last year. Their books and current data show that they are now surging forward. Many are covering lost ground quickly and producing the work that they should for their age. A few still flounder because they continue to grapple with key language skills, which usually link to their specific learning difficulties.
- You and your team hold a firm belief that pupils cannot become successful writers without similar expertise in reading. Consequently, you have enhanced the reading curriculum. Good-quality books, covering modern and classic titles, are available to pupils of all ages. This is bearing fruit in pupils' enthusiasm for reading and their strong knowledge of different authors.
- Boys enjoy reading as much as girls. Pupils came to read to me armed with their favourite books. The most able pupils read exceptionally well, tackling complex texts with ease and understanding. Less-able pupils show real determination to succeed. They are catching up quickly because of the support they receive and their good grasp of phonics.
- You are well aware that pupils' achievement in science is not on a par with that of other pupils nationally. Pupils' books reveal the reason. The quality of science teaching is mixed across different classes. In some year groups, pupils gain a strong understanding of key science concepts. In others, science learning is superficial and fails to deepen pupils' understanding of the world. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop as young scientists by raising questions, investigating their ideas and drawing conclusions.

- Over time, attendance rates have been above the national average. They fell in 2016. Current attendance information shows an upward turn for most groups of pupils. The wide range of strategies you use to promote good attendance is paying dividends. However, this is not true for disadvantaged pupils. While there are small signs of improvement, overall this group does not attend school regularly enough.
- Pupils' books show teachers use their knowledge of pupils' prior learning well to plan exciting activities. Teachers' assessment is accurate. However, this is not translating well enough into the information you and other leaders hold on pupils' achievement across the school. This is because you give too much weight to tests, which are not quite matching the curriculum that pupils study. This gives you and governors a skewed view of pupils' outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they tackle the variation in science teaching so that pupils leave school as well equipped to succeed in science as they do in other subject areas
- they eliminate the higher-than-average absence rates of disadvantaged pupils, so this group of pupils attend school as regularly as their peers
- they review the system for gathering information on pupils' achievement to ensure that whole-school data accurately reflects the strong progress that is evident in pupils' books.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assessment leader and the special educational needs coordinator. I held discussions with two governors, a representative from the trust and a group of older boys and girls. We visited every classroom to talk with pupils, observe them at work and to look at their books. I chatted to a small number of parents at the start of the school day. I took account of the 17 responses on Parent View, including the nine free-text responses. I considered 17 responses from the staff online questionnaire. I also evaluated the 48 online responses completed by pupils.

I considered a range of school information, including your checks on teaching, your self-evaluation and your current action plan. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including your policies to keep children safe, staff training and the safeguarding checks on adults who work and visit the school. I also considered the records you keep of any concerns raised about pupils' safety.