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Mrs Kathy Little  
Headteacher  
Saint Albert the Great Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Little

### **Short inspection of Saint Albert the Great Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 May 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has been through a very challenging time in recent years. Six interim headteachers and other staff changes have had an unsettling impact on pupils, staff and parents. Since your appointment in September 2015, you have galvanised staff and developed a leadership team who share your vision for the school.

You have taken action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Although you have taken steps to improve communications with parents and seek their views, this area of the school's work remains a priority.

Saint Albert the Great is a welcoming school with an inclusive ethos. Governors, senior leaders and staff are committed to providing pupils of all abilities and ethnic groups with the support they need to succeed. Parents typically comment that the school helps their children to develop academically, emotionally and spiritually. Pupils are keen to share their views about their positive experiences of school life and do so articulately.

The school provides a calm, stimulating and vibrant learning environment. The changes you have made to the curriculum, such as the introduction of the Forest School, make learning enjoyable. Pupils say that learning is interesting, fun, but

challenging, and this is because you have created a culture of high expectations among staff and pupils. Rather than focusing on pupils' achievement at the end of each key stage, teachers are now focused on the progress pupils make from their starting point in each year group. You recognise that this needs to be more firmly embedded so that greater proportions of pupils make good progress. Your introduction of learning 'powers' is helping pupils to be confident, resilient and successful learners. As one pupil told me, pupils like the learning 'powers' as they now believe 'I can do this' when given challenging work.

The behaviour of most pupils in lessons is good because they find lessons interesting. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. Pupils are polite and show high levels of consideration towards one another. Pupils told me that good behaviour was expected, and they clearly understand right from wrong. Pupils know that unacceptable behaviour results in consequences and that good behaviour is rewarded.

You are well supported by the restructured governing body. Governors share your ambition for the pupils and describe how standards in the school have improved since your appointment. Governors use a range of information to monitor the work of senior leaders and hold you firmly to account. There is a good balance of challenge and support. The governing body carries out its required duties but has not ensured that the information on the website relating to the pupil premium meets the latest guidance.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, your staff and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding pupils, including the government's 'Prevent' duty. Staff know the action to take if they have concerns about the safety of pupils. Senior leaders make sure the appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out on staff, and governors check safeguarding arrangements regularly.

Each of the pupils I spoke with said that they feel very safe in school because the grounds are secure and adults help them. Pupils say that they could talk to adults if they had any concerns and felt that adults listen to them and support them. Pupils state that bullying is rare and they understand the different types of bullying. They also know the difference between bullying and 'falling out'. Pupils have confidence that adults will deal with the occasional incidents of bullying well. Pupils have age-appropriate knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online and there is a comprehensive section on internet safety for parents and children on the school's website.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that one area to look at closely would be the achievement of disadvantaged pupils because, in 2016, disadvantaged

pupils did not perform as well as other pupils nationally. You and your team have identified this as an area for improvement and have acted quickly to implement changes. You have worked closely with local authority advisers to modify some of your approaches to supporting disadvantaged pupils and tracking their progress.

- Together with the leadership team, I looked at the exercise books for all disadvantaged pupils. Work in books indicates that the pupils make at least good progress, especially the most able disadvantaged pupils. The quality of their work was at least on a par with that of their peers and was often better. This confirms the school's attainment information that indicates disadvantaged pupils in Years 2 and 6 are on track to improve on their 2016 performance.
- Together with the early years leader, I looked at the 'learning journeys' for disadvantaged children in Nursery and Reception. Children's work demonstrates that most disadvantaged children are making rapid progress from their starting points.
- My next line of enquiry was to look at the achievement of the most able girls in key stage 2 because their progress was well below the national average in 2016, especially in reading. Again, this is an area you have identified as requiring improvement.
- Together we visited Year 6 lessons and looked at samples of books belonging to some of the most able girls. We found that the girls were making at least good progress in a range of subjects. Their writing contained a range of connectives, appropriate vocabulary and creative writing that was based on interesting ideas. I was able to see the progress made since the start of the year. In mathematics, the girls completed the additional challenges well and, as a result, they have a deeper understanding of mathematics.
- I listened to a small group of the most able girls read. All were enthusiastic readers who read a wide variety of books in school and at home. The girls had a good understanding of the text they were reading and were able to describe the plot so far. They explained how reading was developing their vocabulary. The current achievement information for girls indicates that their progress and attainment are improving.
- My third line of enquiry was to follow up on an area of improvement from the previous inspection by looking at whether teachers are setting work that matches pupils' needs. Our visits to lessons and the work scrutiny indicate that teachers are now much better at using assessment information to provide work that matches pupils' ability and moves them on to new challenges. We agreed that planning and assessing using pupils' individual starting points are not sufficiently developed to help all groups of pupils make accelerated progress.
- Teachers plan interesting activities. When we visited the Forest School, Year 3 were designing a home to protect gnomes. They used their scientific knowledge about the properties of materials alongside problem-solving skills to build their shelters and justify the reasons for their choice of materials and design.
- Learning activities are often set in a context that pupils can relate to. We observed Year 6 pupils conducting science experiments looking at how colours in sweets stain clothes and then writing a letter of complaint.

- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was my fourth line of enquiry because, historically, the persistent absence for these pupils has been well above the national average. Our discussion enabled me to establish that you are working closely with families to improve attendance and you were able to give me examples of the positive impact of your work. Some pupils are absent for part of the year when they travel with their families. The attendance of most groups of pupils meets the national average.
- As a result of some of the free-text comments from parents regarding behaviour, I added an additional line of enquiry. A small proportion of parents expressed concern about the behaviour of a few pupils who receive support for their social and emotional needs. I looked at your arrangements to support these pupils and found that you ensure that they receive effective support from school staff and external organisations. I looked at the systems you have in place to ensure that pupils are safe should an incident occur and I found them to be appropriate. We agreed that, although relationships with parents are improving, there is more to be done to ensure that they fully understand the inclusive nature of the school.
- I scrutinised behaviour records and the bullying log. I found that records are meticulous and that the overwhelming majority of pupils in the school behave well and that bullying is uncommon. The few pupils who misbehave respond positively to the consequences outlined in the school's behaviour policy.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- planning for and measuring of pupils' progress take sufficient account of their individual starting points
- parents fully understand the inclusive ethos of the school
- the school's website has all the required information about the pupil premium funding.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pardy  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and senior leaders. I talked with pupils from key stage 2 about what it feels like to be a member of the school community. I held discussions with a member of the local authority and with three governors.

I took into account school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I considered the 75 responses to the parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 35 free-text responses. I considered the 101 responses to the school's own questionnaire. I reviewed the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Alongside you, I visited all classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. I listened to pupils from a range of abilities read. Together with members of the leadership team, I looked at the books of all the disadvantaged pupils and of the most able girls in Year 6 to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning over time.

Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding children were considered.