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Mrs Claire O'Hara  
Headteacher  
St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mrs O'Hara

### **Short inspection of St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 December 2012.

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

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

Leaders and governors have sustained a very clear vision for learning, and have high expectations of staff and pupils. Parents, pupils and the local authority talk very highly of the school and its friendly and inclusive approach. This is testament to the commitment of you and your leaders in promoting and upholding strong values throughout school life.

Leaders, including governors, know the school very well. The dynamic leadership team members work together effectively, and have a clear knowledge of the progress and attainment of pupils across school. Leaders ensure that staff know the progress data of their pupils and that they present this to leaders during termly progress meetings.

You and other leaders responded quickly to the areas for development identified at the last inspection. You have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and development needs. You have developed a clear and robust improvement plan for tackling areas of weakness and further strengthening areas that are already good. You recognise the need for pupils to develop resilience and independence in order to be successful and persevere with their learning. This is reflected in the school development plan. Internal data indicates that rates of attendance are

improving this year, yet you recognise that work must continue in this area.

Governors visit school regularly, and minutes of meetings show that they both support the work of the school and challenge leaders as and when appropriate. As a result, leaders have changed the focus of their reports to governors. Now, reports clearly focus on the impact of initiatives, interventions and actions of the school.

The school environment is bright and attractive. Staff and pupils take pride in their school. Displays celebrate achievement and show a range of learning opportunities that are available to pupils.

Many strengths were identified in the previous inspection and these remain as strengths of the school. Internal assessment information shows that pupils continue to make good progress across the school, particularly in reading and mathematics. This is because pupils receive good teaching. However, you recognise that there are some inconsistencies in classroom practice and have already put plans into place to address this. Pupils' attitudes continue to be exemplary, pupils are polite and courteous, and relationships between pupils and staff are strong.

Parents whom I spoke with at the beginning of the day were extremely complimentary of the work of the school, and spoke highly of the leadership team and staff. All parents said that their children are happy at school and that communication is good. Almost all of the responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, stated that they would recommend this school to other parents.

The last inspection identified the need to consolidate improvements in the quality of teaching and further improve the rates of progress for most-able pupils. You have tackled these issues through training for staff and a drive to ensure that school improvement planning is informed by current pupil progress. However, you recognise the need to further improve writing progress and attainment at the end of key stage 2.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet all statutory requirements. All staff receive appropriate training so that they know what to do if they have concerns about a child. You hold weekly safeguarding briefings which ensure that staff have an up-to-date understanding of safeguarding issues throughout school. You are proactive in checking staff knowledge within this area through the use of weekly meetings and testing staff's knowledge.

Governors are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection procedures, and know what to do if an allegation is made against the headteacher. They are up to date in their safeguarding training and there is a nominated safeguarding governor who has also undertaken safer recruitment training.

You ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe through the use of

personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils could talk confidently to me about online safety and 'stranger danger'. They told me, 'Children sometimes have fall outs, but there is no bullying at this school.' The school works hard to ensure that pupils are taught to respect other cultures, and ethnicities and faiths that are different from their own.

Attendance has been below national levels for the past two years, but internal records for 2016 indicate that actions taken to improve attendance over the past year have been successful. You recognise the need to continue to work with families to further improve attendance levels.

### **Inspection findings**

- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached higher standards in reading and mathematics was above average at the end of key stage 2. However, only 7% of pupils were working at a greater depth in writing. Internal school assessment information and inspection evidence indicate that the most able pupils currently in school are making good progress. Attainment in writing for those with high prior attainment is expected to be in line with national levels at the end of key stage 2 in 2017.
- Last year, pupils in key stage 2 made less progress in writing than in reading and mathematics. Leaders have been swift to address this with a whole-school focus on writing. The introduction of 'bottom-line targets' set clear expectations for each class, and the implementation of cursive writing has improved handwriting and presentation, particularly for the younger pupils. Outcomes in pupils' books and internal data suggest that the focus on writing has been effective. Leaders acknowledge the importance of sustaining these improvements.
- Regular monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is well established. Teachers are given detailed feedback and 'next steps' to help to develop their practice. Leaders use information from monitoring to identify where teaching is most effective and ensure that good practice is shared among staff. Leaders recognise the need for pupils to develop the skills of resilience and independence in order to persevere when they find learning challenging. Pupils are encouraged to think about and reflect on their learning through a variety of approaches. These include editing their work and that of other pupils, through assessing their own work against a given set of criteria and through the use of gap tasks in books. This has resulted in good progress in many lessons. Leaders recognise that these practices are not yet consistent across all classes.
- Attendance has been below national levels for the past two years. Leaders have taken a variety of actions to ensure that pupils come to school every day, including the use of awards, certificates and stickers. Parents are aware that fines can be issued for very low attendance. There has been an improvement in the level of absence over the past year in comparison to the three previous years. Rates of attendance are currently above the school target of 96%.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress in writing further improves so that it matches the rates achieved in reading and mathematics
- the quality of teaching within school is further improved by ensuring that good practice is consistent across school
- work with families continues in order that attendance levels improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Melonie Davies  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met a member of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I considered the 34 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents in the playground. I visited five classes to observe learning. I met with a group of pupils and also spoke with pupils in lessons. I looked through pupils' books and scrutinised documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its performance and the school development plan. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including policies. I carried out checks on staff employed in the school and checked the school website. I also analysed pupil information expressed by pupils through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school.