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11 October 2017

Ms Gail O'Flaherty  
Headteacher  
St Edmund's Catholic School  
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Dear Ms O'Flaherty

### **Short inspection of St Edmund's Catholic School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 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 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 a good understanding of the school. You set clear expectations and aim for pupils to achieve their potential. As a result, attainment and progress remain high.

Staffing has remained stable at the school since the previous inspection. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed this year. You have worked to ensure that staff share leadership responsibilities. For example, staff are allocated into curriculum teams. They meet regularly and evaluate the school's effectiveness in different subjects. Link governors work alongside staff, checking assessment information and pupils' learning. As a result, staff have a good understanding of the school's priorities. You have sought to enhance teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics by using local expertise. However, this has not made the difference to the quality of teaching and learning you had expected.

Governors have a good understanding of the school. They work alongside staff to improve weaknesses. For example, a governor with curriculum responsibilities worked closely with the early years lead. They identified that pupils have limited reading skills on entering the school. Regular monitoring of new strategies to aid reading made a difference. As a result, the proportion of pupils able to read in line with national expectations rose.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks are thorough. Training for staff is regular and they are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance. For example, a teacher told me about different forms of extremism in the local area. Staff understand safeguarding procedures well. They have a good understanding of how to use external agencies, should they need to. Leaders know individual pupils and families well. They liaise with external specialists when required. However, record-keeping of individual cases is not as organised as it could be.

Pupils feel safe at the school. The school provides a counselling service, which benefits vulnerable pupils. Pupils told me that they are encouraged to share any concerns they have. They value having staff who make them feel comfortable in sharing their views. Parents agree that their children are safe. They appreciate the caring atmosphere around the school.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and I agreed to look at three areas of the school's work. These were to test the effectiveness of leaders' actions in sustaining improvements. The first line of enquiry was in relation to how leaders and governors ensure that they fulfil their statutory responsibilities, particularly in their use of the pupil premium funding. I chose this because, prior to the inspection, I noticed that information on the website was incomplete. It appeared that parents and visitors were not provided with the necessary policies and information.
- Leaders take their responsibilities seriously. Policies are up to date and reviewed regularly. The use of pupil premium funding is effective. Leaders ensure that they identify pupils who require additional support. They provide small-group and individual help for pupils who need to catch up. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment are high.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school. Link curriculum governors work closely with leaders. They check that leaders' improvement plans are effective. For example, a governor met with pupils and scrutinised books alongside teachers. This helped governors to have a better understanding of leaders' plans. By the end of the inspection day, leaders made sure that all the relevant information was updated on the website.
- My second line of enquiry was to look at actions that leaders are taking to increase the rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils. This was because disadvantaged pupils' absence rates are higher than those of their peers. Leaders make effective use of a partnership approach with the attendance and welfare adviser and external agencies. They have a good understanding of reasons for poor attendance. Reward strategies promoting regular attendance are making a difference. Counselling services for the most vulnerable pupils are effective. As a result of all this, unauthorised absence is now very low.
- A significant minority of pupils, nonetheless, still have high absence rates.

Strategies to engage these families have been less effective. Persistent absence rates for these pupils continue to be a challenge.

- My final line of enquiry focused on leaders' actions to increase rates of progress and attainment in mathematics. Pupils' attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 fell in 2017. Pupils' progress has remained similar to the national averages, whereas in reading it remains high.
- Leaders looked at previous test results to identify weaknesses. They found that pupils' understanding of arithmetic was limited. As a result, planning now reflects arithmetic strategies more than before. I found that pupils have well-developed mental arithmetic skills, particularly in key stage 2. For example, pupils in Year 5 are successfully able to multiply and divide complex decimal numbers.
- Written methods for addition and subtraction are secure. Pupils demonstrate good strategies to complete age-appropriate tasks. Pupils working in a small mathematics group told me that additional support is helping them. They value having support from a teaching assistant. As a result, their written methods and strategies to calculate have improved.
- The school has made the professional development of staff in mathematics a priority. It uses local expertise to work closely with teachers. Some teachers use good questioning to assess pupils' understanding. Lessons are adapted according to pupils' needs.
- The teaching of mathematics across the school still varies. Assessment information is not used effectively in some classes to inform planning. Some pupils I spoke to told me that mathematics lessons are too easy. Tasks set for the most able are not as challenging as they could be. On occasions, teachers' explanations to pupils lack the correct subject knowledge. Consequently, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could and misconceptions are reinforced. This is especially the case in calculation.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress and attainment of pupils in mathematics continues to rise by:
  - improving the consistency of teaching and learning
  - providing pupils with more challenging tasks matched to their needs
  - developing teachers' subject knowledge of calculation strategies
- disadvantaged pupils' absence rates, particularly persistent absenteeism, continue to decline so that their attendance is at least in line with the national averages.

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 Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Noeman Anwar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- I met with you, other leaders and a member of the governing body to evaluate the school's priorities.
- Documentation was scrutinised relating to safeguarding, attendance, pupil premium plans and statutory policies.
- I visited classrooms and scrutinised pupils' work in books alongside you and the deputy headteacher.
- Responses to Ofsted's online surveys, including 66 responses from parents, were reviewed.