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24 October 2017

Mrs Jessica Buzzing
Headteacher
St John's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Buzzing

Short inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 October 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. Under your leadership, there is an ambitious vision for the school's future, a strong team spirit and a determined drive for improvement. Staff are proud to work at St John's Catholic Primary School. One member of staff summed this up by saying, 'St John's is a wonderful place to work and learn.' Staff and governors model the values that are at the heart of the school. As a result, leaders have successfully created a safe, caring environment where pupils settle quickly to work and engage eagerly in the tasks set for them. You clearly demonstrated that the school's ethos of 'a caring community that promotes good attitudes to learning' is the driving principle behind you and your staff's efforts to continue to improve.

You ensure that pupils are well cared for and their well-being is at the forefront of all the school does. Pupils are very positive about the guidance and support they receive from adults in school to help them with their learning. Older pupils are increasingly taking more responsibility in school. For example, taking on the role of playground leaders, who help support younger pupils to play together in a purposeful way. Pupils spoken to during the inspection reported that they enjoy learning, and stated, 'Teachers make learning fun.' Pupils articulated how teachers help them to improve their learning. For example, a pupil stated, 'My writing is more interesting to read because I am now able to use a range of grammatical features, like fronted adverbials.' Pupils are eager to do well and they work diligently in class.

Pupils demonstrate compassion and empathy towards each other in the way they interact throughout the school day. They have a strong sense of their responsibilities as citizens in the community. For example, one pupil wrote a prayer about generosity and compassion for others which expressed a clear understanding of their responsibility to help others in need but not expecting anything in return. Many parents spoken to during the inspection commented on how well the school supports their children's learning and pastoral needs. One parent summed up the views of a number of parents about their relationship with the school when they said, 'This school feels like a much smaller school than it is because the staff know everyone's name and make you feel like you are part of their family.'

Despite significant staffing difficulties, especially at senior leadership level, senior leaders, governors and the local authority (LA) have successfully addressed many of the areas for improvement recommended at the last inspection. Your predecessor acting headteachers, governors and the LA intervened quickly to redress the decline in standards at the end of key stage 1. As a result, provisional outcomes at the end of Year 2 in 2017 improved dramatically in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that improvement has been sustained. Leaders were asked to ensure that pupils had opportunities to apply mathematics skills in other subjects. Pupils now have many more opportunities to use their mathematical skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 5 used coordinates to calculate grid references in geography.

Last academic year, the acting headteacher, who had responsibility for mathematics, brought about improvements in the teaching of mathematics through effective staff training and individualised support for teachers. As a result, outcomes in mathematics improved for the majority of pupils. However, the teaching of reasoning, logic and problem solving is less well-developed. Inspection findings from lesson observations, pupils' books and discussions with pupils about their work demonstrate that the majority of pupils make good progress. However, most-able pupils do not always receive enough challenge to enable them to make the progress that other pupils from similar starting points do in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of a high quality. There is a strong culture of safeguarding through which leaders have maintained a safe and secure environment for pupils to flourish and learn. You have placed pupils' welfare at the forefront of all the school does. Leaders ensure that training for all staff is regular and appropriate for the needs of the school and its context. Adults spoken to during the inspection were clear about what they should do if they have any concerns about pupils' welfare. Your governors and staff have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school and are alert to issues, including the risks of children moving schools who may go missing from education. Designated safeguarding leaders liaise effectively with external agencies in the best interests of pupils.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, outcomes at the end of key stage 1 improved significantly. Effective intervention by leaders ensured that teaching and learning enabled pupils to achieve better outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment at the end of key stage 1 is now in line with, or above, the national average. Appropriate and effective training, support and challenge for staff ensured that the vast majority of pupils made good progress. Improvements in reading, writing and mathematics are being maintained. However, expectations are not always high enough so that most-able pupils receive the right level of challenge. As a result, some of the most able pupils do not always work at the standard they are capable of in mathematics because opportunities to reason, use logic and solve problems are not well developed.
- The teaching of reading is well developed across the school. Pupils love reading and have good inference and comprehension skills. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well in reading. Pupils write often for a variety of purposes as part of their daily routine. They have a well-developed vocabulary, and use of grammar and spelling. However, some most-able pupils do not always transfer their sophisticated vocabulary, grammar and spelling to their written work. As a result, not enough pupils demonstrate they are capable of working at the higher standards in key stage 2. In addition, teachers' expectations of these pupils are not high enough.
- Recently, outcomes in mathematics have been lower for girls than boys. Leaders identified that girls lacked confidence in mathematics and had some specific barriers that they needed to overcome. As a result, leaders implemented targeted intervention for girls to improve their attitudes towards mathematics and build confidence in their own abilities. Girls' confidence in mathematics has improved and they are now willing to tackle challenging problems. For example, one girl said: 'I really love maths now, but I didn't like it before because I didn't understand it. My teachers have helped me find ways to break the question down so that I can find the answer using a range of strategies.'
- Leaders have effective systems to monitor attendance and intervene quickly when attendance slips for individual pupils. The school has well-developed pastoral strategies to provide support and challenge to parents to help improve their children's attendance. Leaders liaise well with outside agencies to ensure that good attendance and punctuality are promoted effectively. As a result, attendance is good.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to raise their expectations and the level of challenge so more pupils reach the higher standards, especially in writing and mathematics
- teachers further develop reasoning, logic and problem-solving in mathematics.

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

John Demmerling
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of your leadership team. I also met with a group of governors and one of the previous acting headteachers. I met with a representative from the local authority. You joined me on visits to classes. We looked at examples of pupils' work.

I talked to pupils about their work during visits to their classes and informally spoke to pupils around the school at different times of the school day. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation of its performance, the school development plan and documents relating to keeping pupils safe. We discussed the most recent information about pupils' achievement. I took account of 30 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text comments made. I spoke with parents at the end of the school day. I also looked at information published on the school's website.