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Mrs H McKenzie
Headteacher
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Wednesfield
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Dear Mrs McKenzie

Short inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Wednesfield

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018, 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's school was judged to be good in June 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Governors have made several key appointments in the last year to strengthen the leadership team. You were appointed as headteacher in March 2017 and a deputy headteacher was appointed at the beginning of the current academic year. Together, you have quickly developed an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need improving. You have begun to address the issues that you have identified. There have been some successes, but staff changes at all levels have held back improvements.

In 2017, attainment and progress in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 were below the national average. This was a surprise to school leaders including governors. Teachers did not have a clear understanding of the new end of year expectations for each year group, leading to inaccurate assessments across the school. This has now been addressed. A new assessment system has been introduced and assessments are regularly moderated with local schools. Leaders now have an accurate understanding of standards across the school for individual pupils. Joint working with other schools has increased teachers' confidence when assessing pupils' work.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics and ensure that pupils had more opportunities to deepen their knowledge in problem-solving. Although many aspects of teaching of mathematics have improved, this has rightly remained a priority for the school.

You listen to parents' and carers' views. Following a consultation with parents, you have introduced 'Walk into learning'. Key stage 2 pupils now start school at the same time as other pupils and go into learning activities right away. This has resulted in a calm start to the school day. A 'Breakfast club' also operates each morning where pupils receive a warm welcome. One pupil commented, 'I like coming because you are always greeted with a smile.' It offers a calm and relaxing atmosphere. Pupils are extremely well behaved and cooperate well with others while accessing the wide range of activities on offer. They also enjoy the variety of healthy breakfast options. They are respectful to one another and to adults.

Pupils feel happy and safe at St Patrick's. They are confident when sharing their learning and talking about how school teaches them to keep themselves safe. For example, they could talk about the different forms of bullying such as cyber bullying. Pupils know what to do if this ever happens to them.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, together with other leaders, have created a strong culture of safeguarding at St Patrick's. Keeping pupils safe is central to the school's work. You have ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust and are understood by the whole school community. Designated safeguarding leads ensure that records are meticulously kept, actions recorded and outcomes reviewed in a timely manner. As a result, pupils are well supported by staff in school or by external agencies. Leaders ensure that all staff and governors receive regular training and updates which reflect the needs and the context of the school. For example, all staff and governors have received e-safety training. As a result, governors have a much better understanding of the positive and negative impact of social media on pupils.

Inspection findings

- Leaders', including governors', evaluation of the impact of their work is not always timely and sharply focused. Governors' roles and responsibilities are not always well thought out and this limits their ability to hold the school to account. Also, close checks are not kept on the use of additional funding. For example, there has been no evaluation of the impact of pupil premium funding to find out if current strategies have improved the performance of disadvantaged pupils, even though attainment and progress for disadvantaged pupils are below those for all pupils across the school and pupils nationally. In 2017, no disadvantaged pupil achieved the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 1.
- Following the introduction of a new assessment system, leaders have introduced half-termly pupils' progress meetings. Pupils are discussed in detail and support is put in place, as needed, to help individual pupils catch up with their peers. These meetings have only recently been put in place. As a result, leaders have

not yet been able to evaluate whether an intervention or a teaching strategy has been successful in accelerating pupils' progress.

- The proportion of pupils passing the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has remained below that expected nationally for the past three years. Teachers and support staff have recently received additional training in the delivery of phonics in the early years and key stage 1. This needs to be fully put into practice. Pupils are developing a good knowledge of letters and sounds to help with their reading and writing. Pupils are encouraged to apply their phonics knowledge to help them to spell and read. During the inspection, pupils were confident to have a go at different spellings and many pupils have developed accurate letter formation. However, pupils' positioning of letters on the line is not always corrected, which means that pupils continue to make mistakes.
- In Year 2 and key stage 2 classes, reading sessions were observed. Leaders have introduced regular reading sessions. Leaders acknowledge that there is not a consistent approach to the teaching of reading skills across the school. As a result, not all pupils are challenged throughout each reading session and so do not have the opportunity to build on the reading skills they already have.
- Leaders have developed a more consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. Pupils enjoy the daily 'brain warm-up'. This provides pupils with an opportunity to apply their arithmetic skills and challenge themselves to achieve a higher score than on the previous day. Teachers ensure that pupils have a good understanding of mathematical vocabulary to allow them to access their learning and solve problems. Presentation in the majority of mathematics books is good, showing that pupils take pride in their work. Internal data are showing that progress in mathematics is accelerating but the school knows there is more to do to increase the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in each year group.
- Leaders have introduced a clear plan for progression for learning across the curriculum which includes 'must', 'should' and 'could' statements. This allows pupils to understand what they are expected to achieve. However, for some pupils, learning time is not used effectively. Lessons do not always allow pupils to build on prior learning. For example, in a key stage 2 lesson, all pupils were being taught to calculate the perimeter and area of a rectangle even though many pupils could already do this.
- The behaviour of pupils is a strength of the school. The school atmosphere is calm and orderly throughout the day. During the inspection, pupils were extremely courteous, kind and polite. The recently introduced behaviour system, 'Good to be green', is fully understood by the pupils. The pupils like the new system and a typical comment was, 'If you get an amber warning, then it gives you the chance to pull your socks up!'
- The newly established leadership team has benefited from the support and challenge of a local alliance of Catholic schools. This has helped to strengthen the skills of the leadership team and in particular its monitoring of teaching and learning. The team has undertaken work scrutinies and identified areas for development, which are followed up in a timely manner.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a consistent approach to the teaching of reading skills is implemented to accelerate rates of progress and improve attainment for all pupils
- teachers use every opportunity to build on pupils' prior learning to accelerate their progress and increase the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard for their year group especially in mathematics
- the use of pupil premium funding is reviewed regularly to ensure that the strategies employed improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- all governors hold appropriate roles and responsibilities and develop the skills needed to hold leaders to account, including for the use of additional funding.

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 Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Johnstone
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I scrutinised a range of documents, including your assessment analysis and school's self-evaluation. I conducted a learning walk throughout the school with you. I talked to pupils throughout the inspection about their learning and spoke to pupils on the playground. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. Together we looked at pupils' books and reviewed the quality of learning in mathematics across the school. I met with the school's business manager to review the school's single central record. I met with you and the family liaison officer to review child protection logs and other documents relating to safeguarding arrangements in your school. I held a meeting with four governors, including the chair. I also met a representative from the local authority. I met with parents on the playground and reviewed the parents' questionnaires. I took account of the nine responses to the staff questionnaire.