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Mrs Charlotte Culleton
Principal
St Francis Catholic Primary School
Rye Piece Ringway
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Warwickshire
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Dear Mrs Culleton

Short inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 school was judged to be good in 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since then, St Francis School has joined the Holy Spirit Catholic Multi-Academy.

Since your appointment as principal in September 2016, you have developed your own new leadership team. Together with your assistant principals, you have clarity about what you, your staff and pupils are expected to do. You can demonstrate that new strategies are being applied and are benefiting pupils. For example, as a result of new reading initiatives, progress of Year 6 pupils in reading in 2017 was in the top 20% of schools nationally.

Pupils say they are happy at school, learning is fun and that friends and adults are kind. Despite lengthy consideration, pupils were not able to think of any way to improve the school, apart from 'more sweets!' Some pupils agree that there are occasional disagreements with peers, but staff help to resolve the issues. Leaders and staff are quick to tackle concerns according to the majority of parents and carers spoken to and through the online survey.

The vast majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, said their children are happy and well looked after at school. Nearly all parents said they would recommend this school to another parent.

All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to work in the school and overwhelmingly believe that the school is well led and managed.

Leaders support, challenge and develop staff expertise effectively through providing training opportunities. Teachers feel their own skills are improving as a result.

The strong relationships between staff and pupils promote excellent learning behaviour, which is evident in every class in school. Staff and pupils alike establish a strong and caring ethos. This shows in the school environment, which is organised and attractive. One parent, typical of many, commented: 'My child's class teacher is such a great role model and has helped my child prepare for the next educational chapter.'

Pupils work well together; they cooperate and support each other in becoming successful learners. School values are well known by pupils and they can explain how these are part of their school life. Pupils are polite, welcoming and calm when moving around the school. They enjoy explaining about their different responsibilities such as hospitality, councillors and play leaders.

Leaders have successfully addressed the two areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Teachers ensure that tasks vary in difficulty to meet the needs of all pupils. They use different numbers of 'stars' on work to indicate to pupils the level of difficulty of tasks. Work in books demonstrates that the majority of pupils are tackling activities appropriate to their needs, although some of the most able pupils are not moved on to more challenging work when they are ready.

Your regular monitoring on the quality of teaching has ensured that teachers are consistent in the quality and style of feedback given to pupils. This consistency of approach has led to pupils improving their work as they respond to the suggestions made.

You have a comprehensive system of monitoring school improvement and leaders write regular reviews of progress. However, it can be difficult to clearly identify the amount of success at different points of the year. Some improvement targets lack specific detail and do not have measurable milestones to compare outcomes against.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an effective culture of safeguarding in the school and staff receive weekly updates. As a result, all staff follow procedures correctly to keep pupils safe. Leaders monitor meticulously that all staff training is up to date, and training records are updated through a detailed computerised system.

There were minor administration gaps in the recording of safeguarding documents which were rectified during the inspection. However, all appropriate checks on staff and visitors had already been carried out thoroughly. Safeguarding records for vulnerable pupils are well maintained and securely stored. You work regularly with external agencies in order to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils are clear that they feel safe everywhere in school and recounted examples of

special days or visitors, such as e-safety day or police workshops on the dangers of drugs. These events have developed pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe.

Inspection findings

- Pupils across the school make good progress. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2017 was above the national average. However, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards in 2017 does not compare as well to the national averages. As a result, this was a focus during the inspection.
- Leaders recognise that the progress of the most able pupils is an area to continue to develop. All pupils identify that the 'steps for success' shared in lessons help them to understand how to move their learning forward. It was evident in work books that pupils' skills are improving, including those of the most able. However, books also show that some of the most able pupils are too often not moved on to more challenging work when they are ready. This means that these pupils continue to practise the same skill when they do not need to and their progress is limited.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new monitoring process in Year 6 where they identify pupils' progress from their starting points at the end of Year 2. Consequently, this has led to the formation of intervention groups to ensure that pupils maximise their potential and, for some pupils, ensure that they reach the higher standards. This enables leaders to have an effective longer-term view of progress in addition to the progress made by pupils in their current year. This approach has not yet been adopted by leaders in other year groups to ensure that the good progress of pupils across the school is maintained and improved.
- Leaders use current assessment information to track pupils' progress and hold meetings with teachers in which they are challenged to identify pupils who need further support. Subsequent follow-up meetings demonstrate that, as a result of effective actions, the numbers of supported pupils are reducing. However, leaders should ensure that assessment information is checked more thoroughly, as some contains inaccurate data.
- Children make strong progress in the early years. Children generally start school with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. The majority finish the Reception Year well prepared for Year 1. This progress is due to the wide range of activities available and the careful planning of tasks that are open-ended and encourage children to learn through investigating. Children make good progress as a result of activities that suit their needs and provide challenge for all. The early years is a purposeful and well-organised, stimulating environment.
- All teachers skilfully engage with pupils through careful dialogue and well-planned activities. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and engage well with activities. Adults use language precisely and have high expectations that pupils do the same. For example, in one lesson the teacher asked a pupil to reflect on what the pupil had said and this led to an immediate correction of the misuse of

grammar.

- Leaders have correctly identified their five key priorities for improvement, and documentation successfully involves all staff, helping them effectively to understand their roles within the plan. You have implemented improvement plan initiatives well and leaders are able to identify their impact in general terms. However, some objectives are too broad and do not contain specific measurable outcomes. As a consequence, local academy committee members are not always able to ascertain the extent to which new initiatives are successful.
- Members of the local academy committee are clear in their understanding of the school's priorities. Members challenge leaders in committee meetings through effective questions, as recorded in the minutes. In subsequent meetings outstanding points are carefully followed up to ensure thoroughness of approach. Members were knowledgeable about the school through appropriate training, presentations from leaders and their own visits to the school. Committee members further challenge leaders through writing detailed reports reflecting and following up on their visit findings. Members recognise the need for more clarity in school improvement documentation, in order to provide them with a more precise and regular understanding of school performance.
- Pupils' behaviour in class and around school was exemplary during the inspection. Leaders analyse patterns of behaviour in detail, and leaders' effective responses have demonstrated a reduction in incidents and a drop in the number of fixed-term exclusions from 2016. All staff in their survey, the vast majority of parents and pupils in the online survey and all pupils spoken to agreed that behaviour was good.
- As a result of historical attendance information, we reviewed the attendance and persistent absence of pupils. Leaders carefully monitor the attendance of all pupils to ensure that persistent absence is challenged. Staff who lead on attendance arrange meetings with parents when required and this has led to increased attendance in a number of individual cases. Despite leaders taking appropriate actions, percentages of attendance remain below national figures, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders have also identified that persistent absence quite rightly remains a focus for the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment information is accurate and used alongside improvement plans that have precise objectives and clear measurable outcomes, in order for academy committee members to further hold leaders to account
- most-able pupils are consistently moved to more challenging work when they have mastered skills during lessons, in order for more pupils to reach higher standards
- rates of pupil attendance improve and that the numbers of pupils with persistent absence continues to be reduced, particularly for disadvantaged pupils or those

who have SEN and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cadwallader
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior executive principal, senior leaders and teaching staff. I also met with three local academy committee members and three trust directors, including the chair and the chief operating officer. I walked around the school with you, where we visited all classrooms, spoke to pupils and looked at pupils' work in books. Later, I took a walk by myself to review learning and books in subjects beyond English and mathematics.

By the end of the inspection, there were 38 recent responses on Parent View and 37 free-text responses. There were 24 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 135 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I took account of these responses, talked with pupils formally in a group and spoke to individuals informally. I spoke to nine parents as they brought their children to school and considered a letter that was handed to me by a parent.

I looked at a number of documents, including: pupils' progress information; the school's own evaluation of its performance; improvement plans; information about the work of the local academy committee and trust directors; records of checks on the quality of teaching and learning; and several school policy documents. I observed pupils' behaviour around school and I asked a range of staff about the training they receive to help keep pupils safe.

I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures and checks on staff employed in the school. I checked the school website. I also analysed the range of views expressed by staff and pupils through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school and its leadership.