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28 March 2018

Mrs Dee Williams
Principal
St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Williams

Short inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 school became an academy in 2015.

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said they would recommend the school to another parent. Their free-text comments were almost all about the positive impact of your leadership on the school since you were appointed in 2015. This view was shared by members of the local academy committee (local governing body), representatives of the Romero Catholic Multi Academy Company (MAC) and almost all members of staff who responded to their survey. All staff responding said that they were proud to work in the school.

Following your predecessor school's last inspection in 2012, outcomes for pupils declined sharply. By 2015 they were exceptionally low at the end of key stage 2. Following your appointment, outcomes have improved significantly. By 2017, outcomes for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 compared favourably with national averages in reading and writing.

You have been particularly successful in turning around outcomes in mathematics, which were previously lower than reading and writing by the end of Year 6, although you recognise that there is still more to do. You have improved the quality of leadership and teaching in mathematics significantly, so much so that both the boys and girls who were spoken to during the inspection said overwhelmingly that

mathematics is now their favourite subject.

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are rising quickly following the relentless action you and other leaders have taken.

You, other leaders, members the academy committee and representatives of the MAC have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. You recognise that, although the school is rapidly improving, it is not yet outstanding. Not enough girls and disadvantaged pupils are currently working at a higher standard or greater depth in reading and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. Standards in mathematics overall are not yet in line with national expectations. Attendance is not improving quickly enough for White British pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, as your own analysis indicates. Leaders' evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium funding is not rigorous enough. Pupils spoken to reported that they did not feel that leaders take enough account of their views.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other senior leaders lead by example and have ensured that safeguarding is given the highest priority at all times. Staff training is regular and up to date so that staff know what to do in any potential safeguarding situation. The culture you have established is one where any issue, however small or seemingly inconsequential, is reported and followed up. Records are held securely and checked daily for any patterns in incidents reported. You have made sure that the site is safe and secure and that all reasonable steps are taken to make sure pupils are safe in school and on trips. You and other leaders ensure that you meet your statutory responsibilities; this is checked rigorously by governors.

The curriculum contributes strongly to promoting pupils' safety and well-being through personal, social and health education lessons and assemblies. For example, pupils have had sessions on 'stranger danger', abuse, bullying and e-safety. All pupils spoken to said that they feel very safe in the school and well prepared for keeping themselves safe outside of school, for example when using the internet at home. This view was supported by the large majority of parents who responded to Parent View and all members of staff who responded to the staff survey.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' progress from key stage 1 to key stage 2 has been on a rapidly upward trend over the last three years. In 2015, progress was exceptionally low in reading and mathematics and very low in writing. By 2017, attainment and progress at the end of Year 6 was above average in reading and writing. A higher proportion of pupils than nationally were working at a higher standard or greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- You rightly recognised mathematics as a key area for improvement, as historically outcomes have been lower than in reading and writing across the school. The introduction of mastery in mathematics, together with an extensive training programme for staff, has transformed the teaching of this subject.

Pupils are engaged and enthused by their 'fun' lessons where they learn through practical investigations and problem-solving. They have developed their skills well in reasoning. In Reception, since the introduction of this approach, the proportion of children working beyond the expected level of development in mathematics has risen from 2% in 2015 to 33% in 2017. For older pupils, where this programme has been in place for longer, there has been a rapid improvement in the progress they are making. In Year 5, for example, the large majority of pupils are making accelerated progress in mathematics. The school has identified that more pupils in Year 6 are now working at expectations and moving towards achieving the higher standard in mathematics than in previous years.

- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made a dramatic improvement in their outcomes compared to 2015 and 2016. Teachers clearly identify disadvantaged pupils in their planning and ensure that their work is closely monitored. The recent introduction of a breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils in Year 4 and their siblings is having a beneficial effect on engaging them in their learning, especially in reading. It also ensures that they attend more regularly and arrive on time, ready to learn. In the early years the introduction of mastery in mathematics meant that, in 2017, the proportion of disadvantaged children who exceeded the expected level of development in mathematics by the end of Reception was well above the national average for other children.
- Although the gaps between outcomes for disadvantaged pupils currently in the school and other pupils are rapidly improving, you know that there is still more to do to boost the progress of some groups of pupils. Currently, not enough girls and disadvantaged pupils are working at greater depth and the higher standards in key stages 1 and 2, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Despite rapidly improving outcomes for pupils, overall attendance rates, although above the national average, have fallen over the last three years. Nonetheless, persistent absence fell from 2016 to 2017 and is now well below the national average. Since September 2017, the overall rate of attendance has improved, reversing the three-year decline. Persistent absence has continued to fall markedly during this academic year. Leaders are tackling absence rigorously. They are taking a zero-tolerance approach to the high number of parental requests for holidays in term time. Leaders analyse attendance closely by pupil groups. The attendance rate is improving rapidly for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, where families have been supported and absence rigorously followed up. Attendance is improving less quickly for disadvantaged pupils, despite the success of the recently established breakfast club. The school has identified that there has been limited improvement so far in the attendance of White British pupils.
- The pupil premium strategy and evaluation does not give those with responsibility for evaluating the impact of the funding clear enough information to check whether funding is making enough difference on outcomes and attendance for disadvantaged pupils.
- The most recent evaluation of the pupil premium for the previous academic year had still not been published on the school's website at the time of the inspection

visit. Similarly, leaders' recent evaluation of the physical education and sport premium lacks rigour and has also not been published. Consequently, the school does not meet the Department for Education requirements for what academies must publish on their website.

- Pupils I spoke to said that the thing they value most about the school is the way that they can talk to their teachers. However, they also said that leaders did not engage enough with them to seek their views. This view was held by girls as well as boys.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of girls and disadvantaged pupils quickens so that more are working at greater depth and the higher standard, especially in reading and mathematics
- the attendance of White British pupils and disadvantaged pupils improves
- the evaluation of the pupil premium funding and sport premium is more rigorous and is published on the school's website
- they consult more widely with pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local academy committee, 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 Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders and other members of the teaching staff. I also met with two members of the local academy committee, including the chair, and a director of the Romero Catholic MAC. I carried out a learning walk of lessons jointly with you, visiting parts of seven lessons. This included scrutinising pupils' books and talking to pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school. I spoke to a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2. I took account of 24 responses to Parent View and 23 free-text responses. I also reviewed 32 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, pupil performance information, behaviour information, and school policy documents as well as safeguarding and child protection records. I also checked the school's website.