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Mrs Milligan
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Milligan

Short inspection of Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 June 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school has been through a period of change in leadership. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the substantive headteacher has not been in school since November 2016. The Diocese and the governing body have successfully steered the school through this period of transition. They put in place an experienced interim headteacher until May 2018. Since this point, you have stepped up from your role of deputy headteacher to be the new interim headteacher. A number of recently implemented approaches are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

You and the leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school. Your improvement planning is concise and focuses precisely on appropriate actions. Regular checks on the quality of teaching have enabled staff, including those who are relatively new to the profession, to receive clear feedback on how to improve their practice. Staff are supported and developed well. Consequently, morale has improved and there is a strong sense of teamwork across the school.

Areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. This is particularly the case in mathematics, which is led well. Teachers regularly integrate problem solving into lessons and, as a result, pupils apply their skills confidently. Attainment in mathematics has improved strongly. At the end of

key stage 2 in 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected and higher standard in mathematics was well above the national average.

The teaching of English has developed, but there is still some work to do. You have ensured that reading has a higher profile across the school. Teachers use a range of modern and classic texts to spark pupils' interest in reading. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their favourite authors such as Enid Blyton and Michael Morpurgo. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were engrossed in a book about the Holocaust and showed a deep understanding when answering questions about the text. The quality of pupils' writing in books is inconsistent; not all pupils are able to transfer their ideas well into high-quality longer pieces of writing. The quality of pupils' handwriting is also too variable.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is high. Pupils appreciate the teaching that they receive and the quality of the learning environment. Comments from pupils included: 'I am proud of our displays because they are eye catching and they celebrate our work.' Pupils are friendly, mature and well mannered. Several pupils spoke with pride about their peer mediator role out on the playground. They relish the responsibility of providing support to other pupils. A range of well-resourced activities enables pupils to be active and purposeful during social times.

You and the staff have worked hard to develop an interesting curriculum. Pupils develop appropriate skills and knowledge through their topics, particularly in art and history. Different trips and experiences help to raise pupils' aspirations and give them wider experiences. Some pupils took on the role of tour guides in Stratford-Upon-Avon, and others visited places such as a local business and the Houses of Parliament and took part in an Anglo-Saxon activity day.

Pupils understand the importance of their Catholic faith, but are tolerant of other faiths. Comments from pupils included: 'Everyone should be treated equally, no matter what their background or beliefs.'

The vast majority of parents and carers are very happy with the quality of education at the school. Of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, most feel that their child is well taught and that they are safe. Not as many parents feel that the school is well led and managed. The changes in leadership have reduced some parents' confidence in the school. However, several commented positively on recent improvement that they have seen.

The governing body provides considerable strength to the capacity and leadership of the school. Governors know the school and provide effective challenge. Over the last 12 months, several knowledgeable and skilled governors have joined the governing body. The chair uses her experience to provide purpose and direction. The governing body and the Diocese work well together, particularly when managing changes in leadership and arranging additional support for leaders.

One area that governors have not addressed is the use of the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding. Some of the funding is used well to provide

additional sports clubs. However, due to a historical leadership decision, part of the funding is used for specialists to cover teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time. This is inappropriate use of the funding and needs to be rectified.

Safeguarding is effective.

The procedures and culture for safeguarding are continually reflected on and improved. The designated safeguarding leads follow up concerns tenaciously. They make referrals to the local authority in a timely way and are quick to escalate their concerns if they do not get a satisfactory response. Record-keeping is thorough. The safeguarding governor carries out effective checks to ensure that leaders are adhering to the statutory responsibilities. High-quality training ensures that staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. You put on 'safety weeks' so that pupils can learn about different aspects of safety. For example, 'internet safety week' has helped pupils to be clear about associated online dangers. Pupils understand the importance of talking to a trusted adult if they are upset or concerned about something.

Inspection findings

- The quality of teaching in Reception is good. Staff's strong relationships and thoughtfully planned activities enable children to enjoy school and progress well. The teacher has clear expectations and ensures that children are challenged appropriately. Although the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been low historically, it rose in 2017. Current assessment information shows that this is likely to rise further in 2018. This improvement is evidenced clearly in the quality of work in children's books, particularly in writing. A high number of pupils have gone from basic mark making at the start of the year to writing simple sentences with capital letters and full stops. Children's learning journeys demonstrate that they make good progress across the different areas of learning.
- In 2017 at the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check was below the national average. Those pupils who did not make the expected standard have been well supported in Year 2 and are now secure in their understanding. Phonics teaching has improved, and current assessment information shows that a high number of pupils are achieving well in Year 1. However, some pupils do not use the correct pronunciation of sounds when they are decoding (breaking up words into sounds), and staff do not consistently correct these misconceptions.
- You have put in place a range of strategies to support disadvantaged pupils. Some of these are successfully raising attainment. For example, in key stage 2 a specialist reading intervention has had a significant impact on improving pupils' reading ages. The picture of disadvantaged pupils' attainment is mixed across the school. They tend to achieve well in mathematics. However, their attainment in writing and reading is not as strong in some year groups. The current pupil premium plan and its analysis do not enable you to carry out a sufficient

evaluation of the impact of your strategies on disadvantaged pupils' progress. As a result, leaders do not have a precise enough understanding of the strategies that may help to raise attainment.

- In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to ensure that leadership is shared among other staff in the school. You have been given effective support and development to be able to step up to the role of interim headteacher. You work effectively with the two deputy headteachers to move the school forward. Other middle leaders also contribute positively to school improvement. They know their areas of responsibility well and regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The member of staff with overall responsibility for pastoral care also makes a significant contribution to the welfare of pupils and to supporting particular families.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of writing enables pupils to develop high-quality longer pieces of writing and to improve the quality of their handwriting
- phonics teaching is further improved by making sure that the pronunciation of sounds are accurate and precise
- the pupil premium plan and its evaluation are sufficiently precise, so that leaders and governors have a deeper understanding of the most successful strategies
- PE and sport premium funding is used according to the statutory guidelines.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meekin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and several other leaders. I also met with five governors and the director of education from the Diocese. I spoke to pupils informally and formally. I made short visits to eight lessons with you and looked at a range of pupils' books. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 22 free text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses to the online questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

I scrutinised various documents including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and the documents that you use to check the quality of teaching. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016 and 2017. I also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.