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Mrs Gill Gittins
Headteacher
St George's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gittins

Short inspection of St George's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you became headteacher in April 2016, you have developed a school ethos that values pupils as individuals. The school's motto, 'Achieve, Believe, Care', captures your vision perfectly and is at the heart of everyone's work. As a result, St George's Catholic Primary School is a happy and harmonious community in which pupils flourish.

There have been considerable changes in staffing since the last inspection, including at senior leadership level. You and the governing body have ensured that these changes have not limited pupils' progress. Senior leaders are knowledgeable and lead their areas of responsibility effectively. Together, you have developed a strong and cohesive team of teaching and support staff. Staff morale is high and pupils achieve well.

You and senior leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what could be even better. This is because you make regular checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Your pragmatic self-evaluation means there is a constant drive for improvement and a determination that all pupils will achieve.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. All of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, stated that their children are taught well and make good progress. The parents I spoke to commented about the school's 'family feel', the high level of care for pupils and how well staff meet

individual pupils' needs, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well. They have positive attitudes and show a real desire to learn. Pupils concentrate well, work hard and listen attentively in lessons. They are proud of their school and learn to be caring, confident individuals who show respect for others.

You and the staff have addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection well. Pupils receive regular feedback during lessons to help them to improve their work. Pupils say they find this feedback helpful. As one pupil explained, 'When we make mistakes, teachers will help us.' Children in the early years have individual 'smarty pants' targets to address their next steps in learning. Children enjoy the challenge these targets provide and busily work towards them during independent learning time. Pupils in key stage 1 work towards group targets, which encourages them to take increasing responsibility for their learning.

Governors share your commitment and ambition. They receive detailed information about leaders' actions and gain first-hand insights into the school's effectiveness through regular contact with staff, pupils and parents. They have received training to extend their understanding of data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. Consequently, governors are clear about the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They have recently commissioned an external review of this aspect of the school's work to ensure that practices are strong. Staff receive regular training and leaders make checks to ensure that everyone understands their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. As a result, staff are vigilant for any signs that a pupils' safety or welfare might be at risk. They use the school's agreed procedures to report any concerns about pupils' safety or welfare in a timely manner. Leaders respond quickly to these concerns and make referrals to external agencies, when necessary.

Pupils I met during the inspection were keen to tell me that they and their peers feel safe in school. They told me that if they are worried about anything, they can speak to an adult or use the 'let's talk' box in the library. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying. They say that bullying is rare and that, if it happens, adults resolve it quickly and 'put everything right'.

Staff teach pupils to stay safe in a variety of different ways, for example, pupils in Year 5 complete a 'bikeability' course to learn how to stay safe when cycling on the road. As a result, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They know how to use the internet safely and responsibly, including not sharing their personal information online and reporting anything that makes them feel uncomfortable to an adult.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to look at how well provision in the early years meets the needs and interests of boys to enable them to make good progress, particularly in listening and attention, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is increasing towards the national average each year. However, fewer boys have achieved a good level of development compared to girls in school and boys nationally in the past two years. Leaders have identified that boys typically start school with knowledge, understanding and skills below those of girls. They are aware that boys, in particular, need to develop their listening and attention skills. In response to this, leaders have made changes to the curriculum and learning environment to stimulate boys' learning. They have set up activities, alongside speech and language therapy support, to develop children's listening skills.
- The stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments provide a range of interesting activities. During the inspection, all boys were actively engaged in learning, with some choosing to draw and write, while others focused on practising their counting, either with an adult or as part of their play. Staff know children well and plan learning that meets their individual needs closely. As a result, work in books and the school's assessment information shows that all children make strong progress from their different starting points. However, despite making good and sometimes significant progress, a gap remains between the attainment and progress of boys and girls in some areas of learning, particularly literacy.
- My second line of enquiry was to investigate how effective the teaching of phonics is in enabling pupils in key stage 1 to make strong progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have introduced a daily phonics programme to improve pupils' reading and spelling. Staff have received training to equip them with the skills necessary to teach this programme well. Consequently, the quality of teaching in phonics sessions is consistently strong. Staff's good subject knowledge means they model sounds accurately. They plan sessions carefully to take account of pupils' different abilities and build progressively on what pupils already know.
- Pupils enjoy phonics activities, and this motivates them to learn well. Teachers ensure that pupils read books that match their phonic ability closely. They routinely expect pupils to use their phonic knowledge when writing. This ensures that most pupils develop into confident readers and writers. Leaders make regular checks on pupils' phonic knowledge and use this assessment information to tailor learning to pupils' needs. Pupils who are not doing as well as they should receive additional support to overcome any difficulties. As a result, current pupils in the early years and key stage 1 are making strong progress. A high proportion of pupils in Year 1 are working at the expected standard.
- My third line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders are ensuring that standards in key stages 1 and 2 remain high, and if all groups of pupils are achieving similarly well.

- Pupils make strong progress and achieve high standards in English and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been in the top 20% for two years. In 2017, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics was significantly above average and in the highest 10%. However, leaders rightly identify that the progress of different groups of pupils varies between year groups, particularly boys. Inspection evidence supports this view. The proportion of pupils making significant progress from their different starting points also varies across the school.
- Provision for writing is a strength of the school. Teachers plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum. As a result, pupils develop sophisticated vocabulary and punctuation, and write in an accurate style. Pupils read with fluency, accuracy and understanding. Younger pupils are able to use their phonic skills to decode words effectively. They also use these skills effectively when they spell. In mathematics, pupils make good progress in number and calculation. Activities that require pupils to apply their calculation skills to solve problems are increasingly frequent. Consequently, pupils' reasoning skills are developing well.
- My fourth line of enquiry was to find out how effectively provision in the wider curriculum meets pupils' needs and enables them to make strong progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Leaders have begun to develop the curriculum, increasing the breadth and depth of coverage as well as making links between subjects, where appropriate. As a result, pupils study a range of interesting topics that enable them to make good progress in the development of their knowledge and understanding, particularly in history and geography. Staff plan regular trips and visitors to school to bring learning to life, as well as providing a range of extra-curricular activities to broaden pupils' experiences and develop their self-confidence. Pupils also benefit from forest school, individual music tuition and different sporting activities.
- Currently, the wider curriculum focuses on developing pupils' reading and writing skills, particularly in key stage 2. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' high achievement in English. However, it does not enable pupils to make strong progress in the development of skills across a wide range of subjects. Although teachers plan interesting and stimulating activities that pupils enjoy, these do not focus on the skills pupils need to learn closely enough. Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics have started to make checks on the quality of teaching and learning, but the development of their leadership roles is at an early stage.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that all groups of pupils make consistently strong progress in each year group, and an increasing proportion of pupils make significant progress from their different starting points, particularly boys

- develop subject leadership and strengthen the wider curriculum so that pupils achieve as well in other subjects as they do in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the two assistant headteachers. I met with the chair of the governing body and three governors. I observed pupils' learning in 12 parts of lessons with you. I looked at pupils' work in a range of books with you and the two assistant headteachers. I held a meeting with representatives from the school council and talked to pupils in lessons. I also listened to a group of pupils read. I examined a range of documentation, including information relating to current pupils' attainment and progress, the school improvement plan and your evaluation of the school's performance. I also scrutinised a range of safeguarding documents. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into account the 90 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.