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Mrs Sarah Ginzler-Maher
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ginzler-Maher

Short inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have high expectations for pupils and staff and you have a clear plan for further improvement. You place great importance on the ethos within the school, ensuring that pupils develop academically, as well as spiritually and morally. You are well supported by the acting head of school, who knows the pupils well and is able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment accurately.

Staff have benefited from working as part of the Christ the King federation, and this has offered more opportunities to moderate work across the schools. This has given teachers a better understanding of assessing pupils' progress. You have also been able to draw on expertise across the federation to strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This is particularly evident in the early years.

Pupils are polite and courteous. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is impeccable. They take a pride in their school and they are always keen to do their best. Pupils talk confidently about their work and the many things that they enjoy about coming to school. At breaktime and lunch, pupils cooperate well with each other and share resources effectively. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, which means that there are very few incidents of bad behaviour. When any minor incidents occur, pupils are able to solve things amicably, often without the need for adult intervention. Year 6 pupils told me that they feel very ready for the next part of their education, although they will be sad to leave the school.

The majority of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted online survey Parent View were positive about the school. One parent, who reflected the views of many, said, 'This school has met all my expectations. My son loves school and he has really come along.' Another parent said:

My children have always loved coming to school. They are happy, safe and well looked after. I feel that both my children, who vary in ability, have made good progress throughout their time at St Francis.

An area for improvement from the previous inspection was to ensure that teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills by writing at length on a more regular basis. By making writing a focus for the whole school, you have made great strides to address this issue. I saw plenty of examples in key stage 2 pupils' exercise books showing extended pieces of writing. You now have an increasing number of pupils who are writing at greater depth, but there is still more work to do so that writing at depth is fully embedded in all year groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have created a culture in which staff, pupils and governors understand the important role they play in keeping children safe. Pupils feel safe in the school. They know what to do if they have any concerns at home or in the school and also when using the internet.

Most parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children feel happy and safe in the school. School records show that bullying is infrequent. Pupils told me bullying is rare and, when it does happen, they are confident that staff will deal with it effectively.

Inspection findings

- I wanted to find out how you ensure that all groups of pupils attend school regularly. You told me about the rewards that are in place to encourage good attendance for individuals and classes. Pupils were proud to tell me about these rewards, which include a weekly and termly class cup, certificates for 100% attendance each term and a fish and chip lunch for those pupils who manage 100% attendance for the whole year.
- You and your leaders have worked closely with parents to improve attendance. You told me about the online methods that you have introduced to help parents track the attendance for their children. You have also ensured that parents are aware that you are happy to administer medication in school, when necessary. As a result, pupils are now missing fewer days for illness because parents are no longer waiting, unnecessarily, for them to finish their course of medicine before returning to school. These strategies are clearly having an impact, as current pupils' attendance figures, for all groups, have improved since last year and are above the national average.

- I looked at writing and wanted to see what changes you have made since the previous inspection. You have introduced new plans across the school which focus more on the composition of writing. I saw in key stage 2 pupils' books that they are editing their work more frequently and in much greater detail. This is having an impact on the quality of their writing. This is evident across a range of books in different subjects. However, these changes are not fully established in all year groups.
- Many pupils were able to explain what they need to do to achieve greater depth in their writing and teachers are giving more time to allow pupils to develop longer pieces of writing at greater depth. You were rightly pleased with your recent key stage 2 results in writing, which show a comparatively higher proportion of Year 6 pupils are writing at greater depth, compared to the national average last year.
- I also chose to look at the attainment of the most able children in the early years. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of children in the early years who exceeded expectations in number and writing was lower than the national average. I checked what you have done to increase this proportion and whether your actions have been successful.
- Children in the early years are very focused when completing work independently. They enjoy their writing and their number work. Current Reception children have made good progress throughout the year. The proportion that exceeded age-related expectations was similar to the national average in number and writing in 2018. The recent introduction of home visits and home learning tasks has further improved the school's partnership with parents. This is also having a positive impact on progress, particularly as children are doing much more reading at home.
- The large majority of children who exceed expectations are girls. The early years lead has introduced activities that she has found to appeal to more boys, such as number work with large dice in the outside area, and she feels this is beginning to have an impact on their progress. However, the impact is not fully evident with the current children, as the number of boys achieving a good level of development is still behind that of the girls.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements are developed fully so that a greater proportion of the most able pupils in all year groups attain greater depth in writing
- appropriate measures are developed so that more boys in the early years exceed in all areas so that the current gender gap is narrowed.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Brentwood, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nick Templeton

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited most year groups with the acting head of school. The English lead, acting head of school and the early years leader joined me to look at the work in pupils' books. I met with three governors. I also met with pupils from Year 3 and Year 6, who shared some of their work with me. I took account of the 55 responses from parents to Parent View, and 52 free-text comments. In addition, 24 responses to the Ofsted online staff survey and the 10 responses to the online pupil survey were taken into account. I also considered additional views submitted by parents and staff. I talked informally to pupils during lessons and breaks. Finally, I examined a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, governors' minutes, attendance and behaviour logs, and safeguarding information.