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Ms Emma Dixon
Acting Headteacher
Wardour Catholic Primary School
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Dear Ms Dixon

Short inspection of Wardour Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 February 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness of good as a result of this inspection.**

Over the last two years, there have been several staff changes. You have provided the much-needed stability during this turbulent time. There is no substantive headteacher in place. However, governors have secured your position as acting headteacher for the whole academic year while they begin to plan for the recruitment of a substantive headteacher.

You are determined and persistent in your leadership. Very recently, your work to improve the operational and strategic work of the school is already making a notable difference. Supervision at breaktimes has been improved, and your work to strengthen the school's curriculum offer is beginning to pay off.

By the end of key stage 2, pupils at Wardour Catholic Primary School achieve exceptionally well. Pupils' attainment has been far higher than that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics for the last few years. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education. Pupils are keen to learn. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning and attend well.

In 2017, the proportions of children and pupils who met the standards expected for their age in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 dipped. This was atypical.

At the last full inspection, you were asked to improve the teaching of writing in Reception so that children develop their writing skills when learning outdoors. The outdoor area is well structured and inviting. Children practise their early mark making and letter formation outside and inside alike. This work is proving successful. You were also asked to improve the work of governors and middle leaders. This continues to be an area of focus for the school.

Increasingly, parents value the communication they receive from governors. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school. However, a minority of parents continue to be concerned about communication, instability of leadership, and the progress that their children make. You recognise that clear communication with parents is imperative. You are fully committed to this and recognise that there is still more to do.

Your longstanding teaching commitment to the school means you know pupils, families and staff well. You have earned staff's respect quickly in your new role. You make sure that you involve your colleagues in important decisions. As a result, you are building up a strong team. Staff say you communicate your next steps clearly and this is helping them all pull together so that the school operates well on a day-to-day basis and continues to improve. However, you recognise that some school improvement initiatives are still very recent.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school undertook an external safeguarding audit in June 2018. Leaders have been proactive in responding to any action points. You have been proactive in planning additional safeguarding training for staff and governors this month to ensure that everyone is fully up to date with current legislation. Staff provide strong care and support for pupils. They apply their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding practice confidently so that pupils' risk of harm is minimised. Staff talk confidently about how to refer concerns should they consider a child to be at risk of harm. Safeguarding records are thorough and well organised.

The school's checks when recruiting new staff are in line with national requirements to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children. The single central record has been updated and meets requirements. However, minor aspects of the school's record-keeping, including making risk assessments specific for the school site, require strengthening.

Pupils say they feel safe. The school curriculum enables pupils to gain a strong understanding of how to keep safe online. Pupils say that bullying is rare and if they have concerns, adults help them sort out any issues quickly. Pupils talk about the uniqueness of the school site and how to mitigate risk. They value the additional supervision they receive at breaktimes.

Inspection findings

- The first aspect I looked at was whether current pupils in lower key stage 2 are making strong progress in writing and mathematics. Pupils' outcomes in writing and mathematics dipped in 2017. Half of this cohort entered key stage 2 working below the standards that are expected for their age. Current teaching is adapted to meet the varying needs of the cohort. Work in books, along with school performance information, confirms that these pupils are beginning to make faster progress. However, a minority of pupils with previously low and average attainment still need to catch up.
- I also examined how well pupils are prepared for Year 1 and whether their reading knowledge and skills are sustained. The proportion of pupils meeting the required standard for the phonics screening check dipped in 2017. When the same group of pupils were in Reception, every pupil met the standards that are expected for their age in reading. The teaching of phonics is regular and systematic. I listened to current Year 2 pupils read. They read accurately and fluently and with good understanding. In 2018, almost every pupil met the required standard for the phonics screening check. You have been proactive in arranging phonics training for staff that are new to the school or class this term to ensure that the consistency of a whole-school approach to teaching phonics continues.
- Another aspect of scrutiny was how well the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics challenges pupils so that they make strong progress. The strategic leadership of the curriculum is beginning to develop. Staff work tirelessly in their own classrooms to plan an interesting and motivating curriculum offer. Work has started this term to bring teachers' individual work together so that there is a clear and strategic overview of what is taught and a planned progression for each national curriculum subject. This work is very recent and remains an area of focus.
- My final line of enquiry examined to what extent leadership systems, including governance, are well established and making a discernible difference so that there is strong and sustained school improvement.
- Whole-school leadership is beginning to stabilise after a sustained period of turbulence. However, leaders' strategic systems to check and monitor pupils' outcomes, the quality of teaching and some aspects of whole-school record-keeping require further work.
- Significant staff changes mean that many teachers with subject or phase leadership responsibilities are new to post. You see this as a short-term challenge. You are providing staff with clear direction. However, it is too early for your influence in this respect to be determined.
- In recent years, middle leaders have been successful in improving the English and mathematics curriculum. This has ensured that teachers are up to date with the higher expectations set out in national curriculum 2014. However, in the recent past, leaders' actions have not enabled all groups and cohorts of pupils to make consistently good progress. Staff changes have also hindered pupils' progress.

- The special educational needs (SEN) coordinator has updated the SEN register and provided training so that working systems in the school are reflective of the SEN code of practice. Increasingly, she is working closely with teachers to ensure that pupils' learning needs are consistently met.
- Governors meet with you regularly and review the information that leaders provide. However, the timings and organisation of meetings have hindered governors in challenging senior leaders about the impact of their work. As acting headteacher, you have already challenged the structure and timings of governing body meetings and suggested changes so that lines of accountability can be improved. Implementing these changes is a priority.
- Governors do not shy away from making difficult decisions. They have secured stability in leadership for the next academic year. Governors are beginning to plan the recruitment process for a substantive headteacher. However, minutes of their meetings do not show sufficient challenge or focus on pupils' outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- substantive leadership for the school is secured so that strong academic outcomes can be sustained over time
- leaders' strategic systems to check and monitor pupils' outcomes, the quality of teaching, and whole-school record-keeping systems are consistently strong
- the strategic leadership of the curriculum is consistently good
- middle leadership continues to stabilise so that those teachers responsible for core subjects and the early years foundation stage enable consistently strong outcomes for pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, other teachers and two governors. I also held telephone conversations with a representative from Wiltshire local authority and the Catholic Diocese of Clifton. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I talked to pupils to hear about their views of the school and listened to pupils read.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, including: development plans; external reports of the school's effectiveness; school performance information; monitoring and curriculum records; analysis of pupils' attendance; and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 38 responses to the Parent View online survey and the free-text messaging service. I gathered the views of staff through discussions during the inspection and reviewed the online staff and pupil survey.