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28 September 2018

Mr Gerry O'Hara
Principal
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Little Sutton Lane
Sutton Coldfield
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Dear Mr O'Hara

No formal designation inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Lois Kelly, Ofsted Inspector to your academy on 18 September 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about outcomes for pupils at the academy.

Evidence

During the inspection, my colleague and I met with you, the vice-principal, the coordinator for special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, phase leaders and other members of staff. I spoke with the chair of the academy committee, and the Catholic senior executive lead representing John Paul II Multi-academy. My colleague talked with some parents and carers at the start of the day and spoke informally with some key stage 2 pupils at breaktime. We visited all classes, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of their work. We also looked at some pupils' books from the last academic year. We scrutinised several documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, assessment information, governors' minutes of meetings and documents relating to safeguarding. We took account of 80 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, along with a letter and an email sent to me by parents.

Having evaluated the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The overall effectiveness of the school remains outstanding.

Context

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school, with 359 pupils on roll. It has expanded from one form to two forms of entry. There are currently two classes in Reception and Years 1 to 4. There is one class in each of Years 5 and 6.

The ethos of the school is Catholic. A Section 48 inspection to evaluate the quality of religious education and the Catholic nature of the school took place in April 2016, when the school's overall effectiveness as a Catholic school was judged to be outstanding.

The school converted to academy status in January 2014 when it joined John Paul II Multi-academy. The multi-academy board of directors has responsibility for the governance of the school. It is supported by the local academy committee. A new chief executive officer for the multi-academy, known as the Catholic senior executive lead, has recently taken up post.

You have been the headteacher since 2008, becoming known as the principal after joining the multi-academy. In the last four years, the school has undergone several significant changes. These include almost doubling in size, which has resulted in the school having a larger catchment area and a more diverse intake. Additionally, several new staff have been appointed and there has been a substantial building programme. You and the academy representatives have effectively overseen these developments, maintaining the school's highly positive and inclusive ethos. Together, you have ensured that staff have responded well to the changing needs of the school. You do not report any difficulties in recruiting staff.

Most pupils are from a White British background. Other pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average and very few pupils are at the early stages of speaking English. The level of deprivation among pupils is below the national average and 5% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, compared with 24% nationally. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than in most schools. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.

Inspection findings

The inspection took place because, over the last two years, pupils' rates of progress in key stage 2 were not as strong as might be expected for a school judged to be outstanding.

In 2016, published school data showed that, by the end of key stage 2, pupils had made similar rates of progress in writing and mathematics to most pupils in the country. The progress made in reading was higher than the national average. Many of these pupils had attained significantly above the national average in reading,

writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. They went on to attain above the national average at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.

In 2017, key stage 2 pupils made rates of progress in line with national figures in reading and writing. The progress made in mathematics was well above average. These pupils had also attained above the national average at the end of key stage 1 and went on to attain above the national average in all subjects at the end of key stage 2 at both the expected and higher standards. In 2017, the proportions of disadvantaged pupils who reached the expected and higher standards in all subjects were above other pupils nationally.

Provisional outcomes for 2018 indicate attainment has improved further, with 83% of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics, compared to 64% of pupils nationally. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils also attained at the higher standards.

Pupils achieve well at the end of the early years and key stage 1, with attainment above the national average. Outcomes in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 are consistently strong.

After the school joined the multi-academy, you identified that pupils were not developing a deep understanding of the mathematics that they were being taught. As a consequence, you introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics. Staff training, monitoring of teaching and adapting the approaches used have resulted in an engaging and effective mathematics curriculum. This has had a very positive impact on pupils' progress and, in 2017, progress of pupils across key stage 2 was in the top 10% of all pupils nationally. You are maintaining these developments through the introduction of a new calculation policy to support consistent approaches to computation across the school. Evidence in pupils' books shows that current pupils are becoming increasingly effective at explaining their mathematical reasoning and solving mathematical problems.

More recently, leaders have had a strong push on improving the quality of writing across the school. This initiative has resulted in almost all pupils achieving at the standard expected for their age by the end of key stage 2, and a greater-than-average proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth. Approaches to assessment and reviewing pupils' progress have been tightened up and all teachers are clear on the standards expected for their year group. Reading has a high profile and the level of challenge provided by class texts has increased. Phonics teaching is strong and gives pupils a firm basis on which to develop their reading and writing skills.

In all year groups, the standard of presentation in pupils' books is consistently high. The work reflects high expectations across a range of subjects.

Phase, subject and senior leaders regularly complete monitoring tasks to check on the quality and accuracy of teaching, as well as the rates of pupils' progress. They

conduct examinations of pupils' work, observe lessons and provide well-informed feedback to teachers. They check that improvement points are quickly addressed and provide support where necessary.

Due to several changes in staff and increasing pupil numbers, you are acutely aware of the need to ensure that you maintain the high quality of teaching across the school. This is particularly the case for teachers new to the profession or to a year group. You have a proven track record of developing staff so that their teaching is of the highest standard. This is due to the provision of effective coaching and support. You have introduced some school-specific non-negotiable rules to ensure that lessons meet your high expectations and to maximise consistency in teaching. You and your leadership team have also introduced a focus on 'back to basics' in relation to spelling, punctuation and multiplication tables.

There is an effective culture of safeguarding within the school. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils are well cared for at all times. They say that they feel safe and they know that the adults in school are there to look after them. You produce a regular safeguarding newsletter for parents, which links to themes that their children are learning about in school, for example bullying and e-safety. All staff have regular and appropriate training to help them understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe from harm. They know the relevant signs and symptoms to look out for. You know your community well and have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the school. Academy committee representatives understand their role in overseeing the effectiveness of safeguarding and monitoring the effectiveness of school procedures.

Between 2015 and 2017, pupils' rates of attendance fell to below the national average and there was an increase in the number of pupils who were absent for more than 10% of the time. You, along with other leaders and academy representatives, took decisive action to address this issue. Attendance now has a high profile, with weekly targets and awards. Phase leaders meet with parents when there are concerns about a pupil's attendance. Parents and pupils are now more aware of the importance of attending school regularly and on time. As a result, during 2017/18, overall attendance rates have improved and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen. When a pupil is absent from school, leaders take effective action to ensure that the pupil is safe and not at risk of going missing from education.

Parents spoken to during the inspection were very supportive of the school. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View felt that their children were safe and happy. Some parents feel that they do not receive valuable information about their child's progress and that leaders do not respond well to their concerns. We found that leaders and teachers do provide information to parents about the curriculum and run workshops on topics such as phonics and mathematics. Teachers are also available at the end of each day to meet with parents and discuss any concerns.

However, leaders and academy committee representatives have not collected parents' views about the information that they would like to help them support their children more effectively.

Since joining the multi-academy, academy committee representatives have provided increasingly effective challenge and support to you and other school leaders. They bring a wide range of skills and expertise to the role and, along with the board of directors, they have 'set the bar high', helping you to drive up standards. Representatives have a clear overview of the context, strengths and development priorities of the school. They keep a close eye on pupils' outcomes and progress across the year.

External support

Over the last few years, the school has become more outward-looking and you seek expertise from a range of external sources to provide training and advice. You have maintained strong professional relationships with your local cluster of schools. You also welcome external moderation to help to validate the judgements you and your team are making.

As a result of working with the other schools in the multi-academy, there is a growing openness and accountability which encourages the sharing of good practice and supports your drive for high standards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning routinely meets leaders' very high expectations, especially for staff new to the school or year group.
- Develop additional opportunities to involve parents in their children's learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy committee, the chair of the board of trustees, the Catholic senior executive lead representing John Paul II Multi-academy, 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

Catherine Crooks
Her Majesty's Inspector