

2 October 2018

Mr Karl Babarczy
Headteacher
St Christopher's Catholic Primary School
Wolverhampton Road
Codsall
Wolverhampton
West Midlands
WV8 1PF

Dear Mr Babarczy

Short inspection of St Christopher's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You became headteacher in April 2015 after being the deputy headteacher for two years. Together with your staff and governors, you show determination to ensure that every pupil receives a good standard of education. Your enthusiasm for the success of the school is clear. Pupils enjoy coming to school, where they learn and achieve well.

You and other leaders are ambitious for the pupils and have high expectations of what they can achieve. All staff and governors are keen to ensure that pupils are ready for the next stage in their education. Leaders place as much importance on the development of pupils' personal and social skills as their academic skills. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Leaders have made strong links between the school's motto 'Love one another' and the school rules. As a result, pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and as they move around the school.

The school's previous inspection report identified the need to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching at the school. You have successfully addressed this. You ensure that this excellent practice is used effectively to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. Additionally, staff work collaboratively with their colleagues in a local alliance of four schools. Teachers value this opportunity for professional development and the chance to work together and share good practice.

The school was also asked to increase the proportion of pupils who achieve the highest standards. Meetings about pupils' progress are held each term. You ensure that the focus is on what pupils can already do and the next steps to build on this. There is a high expectation that pupils will make the progress they need in order to reach the standards of which they are capable. Assessment information about current pupils shows that they make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics in most year groups. There has been significant success in reading. Over the last three years, a higher proportion of pupils achieved the expected and higher standards in reading at the end of key stage 2 than the national averages.

The majority of parents and carers spoken to, or who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, are positive about the work of the school. They praise the care for their children and they are pleased with the good progress that their children make. Many also said that teachers are very welcoming and listen to any concerns they have. However, a significant minority of parents expressed concerns that leaders do not listen well enough to parents' views and that they do not deal effectively with bullying. Records show that leaders do tackle behaviour issues consistently. Additionally, any allegations of bullying are taken seriously. However, leaders and governors are aware of the need to communicate the actions they take to parents more clearly.

Governors take an active role in school. They are determined that pupils will have a positive experience of school. Governors make regular and structured visits to the school to gain a deeper understanding of the quality of provision, for example through the links each governor has with subject leaders. This enables them to hold leaders to account. Governors place great value on the importance of pupils' emotional well-being and ensure that provision is made to support this. Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. For example, the safeguarding governor carries out termly checks on the single central register of staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Appropriate checks are carried out on staff before they take up their posts. All staff have appropriate child protection training and updates are shared by the headteacher. This ensures that staff are up to date with their knowledge and understanding of how to keep children safe. Staff take their safeguarding duties seriously and they know what to do if they have any concerns. Child protection records are well organised and stored securely.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They told me that they learn how to stay safe online and to use local roads safely, and that they have an awareness of the danger strangers can pose. Pupils say that teachers are fair and everyone understands the rules. They believe that most pupils behave well at school. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying and they say that it does not happen at St Christopher's. They are confident that, if anyone was being bullied, an adult would deal with it.

Inspection findings

- Progress of pupils in writing in key stage 2 was an area of focus for this inspection. Over the last three years, rates of progress in writing in key stage 2, although average, have been lower than in reading or mathematics. You have revised the curriculum to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to apply their writing skills in a variety of subjects. For example, pupils write persuasive letters in history and explanations about experiments in science. Teachers have high expectations of the amount and quality of writing that pupils produce. Pupils enjoy writing and many take great care with the presentation of their work.
- You have made sure that all teachers have strong subject knowledge and they impart this well to pupils. As a result, pupils develop a sound understanding of grammar, how to use punctuation and how to apply spelling strategies. Teachers know what their pupils can already do and plan tasks that will build upon their starting points. In addition, teachers ensure that pupils know the features of different types of writing. Consequently, most pupils are making strong progress in all classes. However, some of the most able pupils are not making the progress they need in order to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable. Occasionally, tasks are too easy and there are not enough opportunities for the most able pupils to apply their skills independently.
- A second focus of this inspection was to review the quality of teaching in key stage 1. In 2018, there was a decline in the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard and greater depth in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' mathematics books show that teachers are planning tasks that ensure that pupils can practise basic calculation skills. Additionally, in Year 2, there are increasing opportunities for pupils to apply these skills when solving mathematical problems. Teachers encourage pupils to use mathematical vocabulary when reasoning about their work. Consequently, pupils are confident when sharing their answers and many are keen to prove why their answers are correct. However, pupils' books show that, sometimes, the most able pupils find tasks too easy because the level of challenge is insufficient. This limits the amount of progress that the most able pupils can make.
- Writing tasks in key stage 1 are linked to books that the class have shared or to the topics being covered. For example, pupils in Year 1 wrote descriptions of autumn. However, teachers' expectations of the amount that pupils will write are occasionally too low. Also, the use of worksheets with fixed finish lines prevents pupils from writing more, even if they want to.
- My final line of enquiry was about the curriculum and pupils' preparedness for life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy the topics they study and they spoke enthusiastically about opportunities to be creative, play sports and carry out experiments in science. Teachers ensure that pupils develop a deep and broad knowledge in several of the national curriculum subjects. This is in addition to English and mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 3 confidently shared facts about Tutankhamun and the treasures that the archaeologist Howard Carter discovered. They were able to use this knowledge to explain, in detail, why the British Museum would have wanted to own these historical artefacts.

- Pupils develop a secure understanding of British values. For example, they talked enthusiastically about learning about different religions and visiting places of worship. Pupils are respectful of others who have different religions and beliefs to their own. Additionally, they develop an awareness of democracy through school council and house captain elections. Pupils aspire to these roles because they feel they can make a difference to what happens at school. For example, school council members are very pleased that they helped to bring about the provision of new toilets in the school. Pupils say that everyone is welcome at St Christopher's, regardless of their religion or background. They like the opportunity to learn greetings in new languages so that pupils who have come from abroad feel welcome.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils achieve the highest standard in writing at the end of each key stage
- teachers in key stage 1 use their knowledge of what pupils can already do to plan tasks that provide stretch and challenge for everyone
- they communicate more effectively with parents who have reported concerns about the behaviour of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders, parents and governors. I spoke on the telephone to an educational consultant who provides support for the school. I visited the breakfast club. Together we visited classrooms and looked at pupils' work. I also met with a group of eight pupils.

I reviewed the school's website and documents, including the single central record, child protection records, the school improvement plans, monitoring information and pupils' progress and assessment information. I took account of the 109 responses from parents, including 56 comments from parents by text. One member of staff responded to Ofsted's questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil

questionnaire.