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Mrs Debbie Beirne
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Dear Mrs Beirne

Short inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Bloxwich

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 October 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 have introduced a number of changes to the curriculum of the school, which are securing improvements to teaching and pupils' outcomes.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors found that the curriculum was not making enough links between subjects to help pupils to learn coherently. You have addressed this by organising your curriculum so that pupils have opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills more readily across the curriculum. Inspectors also judged that pupils needed to be sharper at assessing their work against the targets they were given. You have developed a unified approach across the school which requires pupils to understand what they are learning so they are able to assess their work accurately.

You have improved the leadership of mathematics to address pupils' low outcomes in recent years at the end of Year 6. Together with senior leaders, you have introduced wide-ranging activities to boost pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills. Pupils are now able to use the school 'convince me' approach to explain their understanding of mathematical problems. Your strategy to improve the achievement of pupils in mathematics demonstrates that you and your staff are working hard to make sure pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Your recent introduction of a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading

is contributing to better achievement in this subject area. Pupils' work in lessons and in books shows that they are making strong progress. Your approach to the teaching of reading is helping pupils to extend their vocabulary and improve their understanding of what they have read. This is contributing to pupils applying their knowledge and skills more readily in everyday reading.

Your passion for improving the learning experiences of every child is clearly evident. You have focused on the correct priorities for school improvement. You are taking effective action to address areas of weakness, such as the progress of some pupil groups from their key stage 1 starting points. You have ensured that leaders are involved in checking regularly the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility. The information gathered is used to measure the impact of initiatives on pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics.

In the early years, children excel from their low starting points because they clearly enjoy the well-planned learning opportunities on offer to them and acquire new skills quickly. The focus on language acquisition, teachers' high expectations and opportunities to learn through experiences ensure that children get off to a successful start. They are well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.

Pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also clear strengths of the school. The school strongly promotes British values, especially through the curriculum and its Christian ethos.

Pupils are articulate and speak highly of their school. They are focused and attentive in lessons and their conduct around school is very good. This is because the school has placed great importance on fostering a caring culture. In your words, 'becoming the best I can' is ensuring that all pupils are achieving well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding systems are robust and fit for purpose. You and your governors take every precaution to ensure that pupils are safe at school. Leaders make sure that staff receive up-to-date training and are aware of the most recent safeguarding advice. Effective recording systems are fully in place for the recruitment of staff. Governors assure themselves that the necessary checks have been made and documents are in order.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet, crossing the road or when riding bicycles. During informal discussions, the overwhelming majority of parents and carers were confident that their child is happy and safe at St Peter's Primary School. Pupils and parents spoken to during the inspection were confident that the adults at school dealt with any instances of bullying effectively.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and

areas for development. This is because you check pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment regularly. The accurate analysis of school performance information is used successfully to address any areas of underachievement. The school improvement plan identifies the right priorities to help improve the school further.

- Since the last inspection, you have responded well to the inspectors' request to develop the links between subjects and to improve pupils' confidence in assessing their work against the targets set for them. Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum that develops their interests and deepens their knowledge. It is greatly enriched by a range of experiences such as: a Year 3 visit to a chocolate factory; Year 1 working with fossils; and a performance of 'The Hobbit' delivered at school by a theatre company. When I asked pupils about their targets, they were able to articulate these and explain what they need to do to achieve them. There is also evidence in books that pupils are now confident in assessing their work.
- You have used external support well to increase attendance at school. As a result, you are able to monitor attendance with more rigour, and to identify patterns of absence which are then shared with parents. You also encourage improvements in attendance through positive rewards and celebration assemblies. The systems and strategies that you have adopted have resulted more recently in an increase in overall attendance.
- Children in the early years continue to make good overall progress from their starting points in almost all areas of learning. The proportion of pupils at the end of the early years achieving a good level of development has been consistently high for the last three years. However, you have rightly recognised that children exceeding the early learning goals is now a priority for the school.
- You have correctly identified problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics as a school priority. As a result, you have developed a school-wide programme that gives pupils opportunities to engage in the more practical and investigative aspects of mathematics. This is developing pupils' mathematical vocabulary, and their approach when solving problems is much more systematic.
- In reading, higher-level analytical skills are being developed systematically so pupils can think more deeply about the texts they are reading. This is resulting in pupils being able to comprehend better what they have read and rising standards in reading.
- You and the other leaders have ensured continued improvement in outcomes for pupils. The results of the Year 1 phonics check have been consistently above average and show a rising trend over time. According to the provisional results from 2018, there has been a rise in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1, and a notable rise in pupils achieving at greater depth in reading and mathematics. Pupils' attainment in writing at greater depth is improving but it is below the national average. You are attending to this across these key stages by better teaching. This includes improving pupils' skills in vocabulary and showing them how to write for different audiences and purposes.
- Although nationally published data indicated a decline in attainment at the end of

key stage 2 from pupils' starting points, disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, now make similar good progress to their peers.

- You are aware that, at times, the most able pupils do not have the same guidance and support from adults as the other pupils. Better guidance would enable them to make the progress of which they are capable and achieve even more. Work in these pupils' books shows that teachers do not routinely provide the precise support that helps the most able pupils to understand what they have to do to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers embed the systematic approach to reasoning and problem-solving, and so raise standards of mathematics across school
- adults support the most able pupils more effectively to do as well as they can in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of each key stage.

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

Yours sincerely

Khalid Din
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, members of the governing body including the chair, middle leaders, and a representative of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. I spoke with pupils informally at lunchtime and met with a group of six pupils. I heard them read and discussed with them the school's work. I observed teaching in almost all classes, where I also looked at pupils' work to consider the quality of learning over time. I reviewed the school's documents about safeguarding, including the single central record, attendance information and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. I also considered the 22 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.