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Mrs Geraldine Pears
Headteacher
Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Pears

Short inspection of Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and the skilled leadership team have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have improved the teaching of mathematics across the school. Pupils develop secure methods for calculation, and, as they move up the school, a deeper understanding of how to show their reasoning skills. Teachers plan activities using their knowledge of pupils' prior learning. Pupils' work in books shows that pupils acquire appropriate skills to make strong progress. Assessment information shows that a greater proportion of pupils are on track to meet and, for the most able pupils, exceed their age-related expectations. Leaders identified the reasons for the slight dip in progress for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2018. The current Year 6 have begun the year as a less mobile group of pupils with stronger academic starting points.

Leaders and staff work hard to improve pupils' writing skills. Books show work is of a consistently high quality over a range of subjects. Pupils write long pieces of work and adapt these based on the intended audience, in particular in the subject of religious education. Staff have very high expectations of pupils; the work displayed in classrooms and communal areas demonstrates this. It also shows the wide range

of subjects in the school's broad curriculum.

Your high ambitions are evident through your relentless drive to improve the life chances for all pupils who come to the school. You and the leadership team demonstrate through a range of evidence that pupils make substantial progress from their low starting points. All staff clearly model the 'Love Learn Believe' ethos of the school. They ensure that all families feel part of the school community and celebrate the school's diverse population through assemblies. The very popular 'International evening' is also an opportunity for families to share their cultural heritage. Throughout my visit, pupils were impeccably behaved, courteous and eager to share their learning. Work in books is consistently very neat and of a high quality. Leaders invest in training for support staff to ensure that they enhance pupils' learning. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points. Staff use appropriate resources so that pupils access learning independently.

Governors ensure that families receive the support they need so that their children attend school regularly. Currently, rates of attendance are above the national average. They understand the challenges families may face and ensure that those entitled to additional funding are able to access the wide range of clubs and trips. They have a strong grasp of the school's performance and have identified that progress in reading is an area for improvement. They challenge leaders to improve pupils' progress in reading.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding records are meticulously kept. Leaders complete checks to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Designated safeguarding leaders are fully up to date with recent guidelines. This ensures that they train staff appropriately in how to keep pupils safe. All staff are trained in the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders have excellent knowledge of the families at the school, which means that appropriate support is given when needed. Leaders work effectively with external partners. As a result, the most vulnerable pupils receive well-targeted support.

Pupils know how to assess risks using online technology. They have a strong understanding of the different types of bullying. Pupils spoken to said that teachers have worked hard to reduce any incidents of bullying that may occur. Pupils have a clear sense of moral responsibility and relish the chance to take on roles that mean they can contribute to the school. For example, the roles of Junior Travel Ambassador, Prefect, Monitor and Eco Warrior all provide pupils with leadership opportunities. Pupils show a strong understanding of the issues that may affect them when they become adults, for example plastic usage and climate change. Parents' and carers' responses to the Ofsted survey show a very positive relationship with the school. Parents agree that the school keeps their children safe and happy. One written response typically said: 'I recommend this school to parents all the time because I really think it's a place where the children thrive.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three key lines of enquiry. The first was how leaders ensure that pupils make strong progress in reading. This is because the results in 2018 showed a dip in progress for Year 6 pupils.
- Leaders have identified reasons for this. Thorough analysis showed that the higher than usual level of pupils who had joined or left the school part way through their primary education had impacted on the overall results. This was the first Year 6 with an additional class.
- Staff training ensures that teachers use challenging texts so they develop pupils' deeper understanding of vocabulary. Visits to classes showed that this has been successful. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Pupils' responses show that they have a strong grasp of the way authors use language and the effect this has on the reader. Pupils choose for themselves challenging texts to read.
- In a Year 4 class, pupils could explain how reading the Roald Dahl text 'The Witches' was helping them construct their own stories. Pupils who read to me during the inspection talked animatedly about how much they enjoy reading. A pupil said reading the book is 'better than watching films as you can visualise the scenes'.
- A greater proportion of pupils in Year 6 are on track to make strong progress than last year; this includes the most able pupils. Leaders are focused on developing pupils' comprehension skills further.
- The second line of enquiry explored how pupil premium funding is improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. In 2018, this group of pupils did not perform as well as other pupils nationally, by the end of Year 6.
- Leaders track effectively the way the funding is used across the school. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils receive high-quality support when they need it. Currently, the school's assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils make strong progress across the school.
- The final line of enquiry was to look at the progress of Black African pupils, because, by the end of Year 6 in 2018, they were not making as much progress as their peers.
- Leaders identified that the texts used in classes should better reflect the cultural heritage of all pupils. Work to address this has been successful. Assessment information and books show that Black African pupils are making similar progress to their peers, particularly in reading and writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers promote reading strategies so that a greater proportion of pupils make sustained progress from their starting points.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the archdiocese of Westminster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnet. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morgan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the leadership team. I held discussions with governors and a representative from the local authority. I heard a group of pupils read and talked to them about their learning. I scrutinised a number of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, assessment information, pupil premium impact report, single central register, safeguarding information, leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning and a number of pupils' books. I visited most classes, accompanied by the headteacher. I took into consideration 11 pupil responses and 15 staff responses to the online surveys. I also considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View.