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Mrs Mary O’Friel  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs O’Friel

### **Short inspection of St Edmund’s Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 April 2014.

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 grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and the head of school are reflective and focused on aspects of the school that need to be improved. Over the last few years, outcomes have not been high enough at the end of Year 6, particularly in reading. In your evaluation document, you rightly judge key stage 2 outcomes as a key issue. Significant staffing changes, coupled with a lack of urgency to address weaknesses in reading, have led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

The school improvement plan is not fit for purpose. Some of the key priorities are too general and lack focus on the most important weaknesses. The plan does not highlight the timescales in which actions will happen and there is no clear way of measuring the success of actions taken to address key priorities. You and the head of school have a clearer strategy when you check the quality of teaching and pupils’ progress. These processes enable you to know where teaching needs to be improved, or where pupils are falling behind in their learning.

There are aspects of the school that have improved in recent years. Last academic year, you focused on improving the quality of teaching in mathematics. This has started to have a positive impact. Pupils are applying their mathematical skills to problems more frequently. In response to the previous inspection, provision in the

early years is of a better quality. A clear focus on children's physical development has been one contributing factor in the improvement of outcomes. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen steadily and is broadly in line with the national average. Children's progress in letter formation and handwriting is a strength in the early years.

You have put in place several new and necessary approaches to teaching during a time of considerable staff change. Staff are getting used to some of these new approaches. Sometimes, pupils who are finding the work easy are not moved on quickly enough. Conversely, pupils who sometimes find work challenging do not get the timely support that they need.

There is a strong sense of togetherness across the school community. Relationships between pupils, parents and staff are positive. Parents who shared their views during the inspection are happy with the quality of education and how well informed they are about their children's learning. Staff feel that leaders support their development and consider their well-being.

Pupils enjoy going to school and behave well in lessons and at social times. You have ensured that pupils are clear about the school's process for managing behaviour. Pupils are motivated by the school reward systems. A range of activities set up on the playground make lunchtimes a positive experience for pupils.

You and other leaders have ensured that vulnerable pupils receive the support that they need. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive timely additional support and their progress is tracked carefully. Pupils who have social and emotional difficulties access the nurture provision. This helps them to manage their behaviour and access learning in the classroom.

Governors are committed to the school and are aware of what the school needs to do to improve. Their understanding of safeguarding is good, and they know some of the trends in relation to pupils' attainment. However, there is some work to do to ensure that governors provide a consistent level of challenge. The end of key stage 2 statutory data did not receive sufficient challenge in 2018 and they have not ensured that leaders are evaluating the impact of pupil premium funding effectively enough.

Aspects of wider school life are developing well. Pupils enjoy a range of curriculum topics. During the inspection several pupils demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of ancient Egypt and the Amazon rainforest. Staff organise trips out of school for pupils, and visitors come into school to enrich the curriculum. You have ensured that the physical education and sport premium is evaluated for impact. For example, you have identified that not enough pupils are able to swim 25 metres and are now planning additional opportunities for weaker swimmers.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for

purpose. Safeguarding procedures are well organised and the designated safeguarding lead is very thorough in her work. Concerns are taken seriously and followed up well. There is a positive focus on early intervention by helping families to access family support services and early help.

Staff receive regular updates to help them keep abreast of the latest guidance. As a result, their understanding of safeguarding is good. In September, staff received training on the new statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education', 2018, and on the dangers associated with child sexual exploitation. Leaders delivered the training and then checked to ensure that staff understood the key messages.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Safety is taught well in the curriculum. Pupils are clear about the dangers of using the internet and would report any concerns they have to a trusted adult. Some pupils have visited a local venue to learn from the fire service about a range of potential safety issues.

### **Inspection findings**

- The teaching of reading has not been a high enough priority. Attainment by the end of key stage 2 has not been high enough and progress had declined in the last two years. You have ensured that it features more prominently on this year's school improvement plan and some early actions are positive. However, more work in certain areas is needed to improve further. These areas are detailed below.
- You have changed the way that guided reading is taught. Pupils are now accessing age-appropriate and enjoyable books in these sessions. Staff are planning useful follow-up activities, so that pupils can demonstrate their understanding of the text and explore new vocabulary. Pupils are enthusiastic about the books they are reading in these sessions. However, this approach needs embedding consistently. Sometimes, teachers' questions do not offer pupils a sufficient level of challenge, particularly in relation to higher-order comprehension skills, such as inference.
- Opportunities for pupils to be heard read individually are not yet well organised. A new system is in place but is not having the desired impact. Pupils have a home and school reading book log. Some pupils have too few entries in these and are not being heard reading regularly enough. There is no clear and organised system to ensure that pupils, especially weaker readers, are identified and given more opportunities to read individually. The store of fiction books in class reading corners are not resourced well enough to enable pupils to read widely.
- You have put a positive focus on phonics teaching in the early years and in key stage 1. As a result, phonics outcomes at the end of Year 1 are good. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been broadly in line with the national average over the last two years. However, pupils take home reading books from several different schemes. As a result, pupils sometimes struggle to read certain words because some books include sounds they have not yet been taught.

- Historically, attainment in key stage 1 mathematics has not been high enough. You responded well to this weakness by putting in place a new approach to teaching mathematics across the school. Teachers now provide a more consistent level of challenge for pupils, particularly in relation to applying their mathematical understanding. Pupils' reasoning skills are developing well in some year groups. Staff are carrying out regular assessments to check how well new learning has been understood. Sometimes, this information is used effectively to support or challenge pupils. Outcomes in mathematics were more positive in 2018. In key stage 1, a larger proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard, and in key stage 2 more pupils achieved the higher standard than in 2017.
- The large number of disadvantaged pupils in the school attracts considerable pupil premium funding. No overall evaluation of the impact of pupil premium funding spending for the last academic year has been undertaken. Neither is there a plan in place of how this funding will be spent this year. Therefore, leaders and governors cannot strategically evaluate where the funding has proved most successful. Nor can they use this evaluative information to plan where money would be best spent in the future. While disadvantaged pupils' attainment is not a serious concern, it could and should be higher for some pupils in key stage 2.
- You have put in place some useful strategies for disadvantaged pupils. The breakfast club provides a positive start to the day for pupils and helps them to settle into learning in the mornings. A high number of disadvantaged pupils access the nurture provision, which has a positive impact on their behaviour. You have also ensured that disadvantaged pupils are a key focus of the meetings you hold with teachers to discuss pupils' progress.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school improvement plan precisely identifies how the most important priorities will be measured for success and the exact timescales for actions
- pupil premium spending is evaluated for impact more effectively and the evaluation is used to inform future spending
- governors hold leaders to account more effectively for end of key stage 2 statutory performance data
- the teaching of reading comprehension is consistently challenging, particularly in developing pupils' inference skills
- reading books that are taken home in early years and key stage 1 align accurately to the sounds that pupils have been taught
- systems to monitor how often pupils read at home and at school help to identify which pupils need to be targeted for additional individual reading
- fiction reading books are appropriately resourced for pupils' individual reading
- new approaches to teaching are fully embedded, so that pupils receive an appropriate level of challenge or support.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meckin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the head of school and several other leaders. I met with two governors and spoke to a representative from the local authority and the diocese. I spoke to pupils informally and formally. I made short visits to eight lessons and looked at a range of pupils' books. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered the eight free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

I scrutinised various documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and the documents that you use to check the quality of teaching. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils. I also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.