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Mrs Mary Mainwaring
Executive Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Mainwaring

Short inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 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.

Despite only taking up your post in September 2018, you and other leaders have worked with great determination and effort to build upon and develop key areas of the school. This has ensured that the quality of education remains consistently good. Your drive for improvement, focus and support from other leaders has in particular led to greater consistency in teaching. Because of this, outcomes for pupils are improving. You have very high expectations of yourself, your staff and your school. Parents and carers recognise the effort you make to celebrate the unique qualities of every pupil.

You have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and have successfully tackled the areas identified at the previous inspection as needing improvement. For example, you have strengthened the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers make the best use of time and have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected from them and are extremely motivated by the curriculum. You and other leaders have also ensured that actions for school improvement have been monitored in a more robust and timely manner. This has resulted in improved outcomes for pupils and teaching that is consistently good.

You benefit from working with a group of local schools and skilfully guide and support your leaders. They make good use of the time you give them to monitor

and evaluate the impact of their actions. This improves the quality of teaching and the standard of written work in pupils' books. Staff share your vision and are passionate about the quality of care and education that pupils receive. Your actions have built upon the good work completed by other leaders at the school prior to your arrival. Pupils made better progress in 2018 in reading, writing and mathematics because of this. Current pupils' work also shows that these improvements are being sustained.

The school is a vibrant and happy place to be. Staff and pupils are very welcoming and clearly proud of their school. Pupils of all ages, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, show extremely high levels of enthusiasm and engagement. Pupils also confidently apply their knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of subjects. This has a positive impact on the progress that they make, particularly in writing. Every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school. One parent shared the views of many by stating that the school you lead is like a second family for their children where they feel welcomed and loved.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have developed a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures and use them appropriately. Governors make regular checks of the school site and ensure that procedures are in line with current legislation. Staff training for safeguarding and child protection is also up to date, enabling staff and governors to discharge their duties fully. Senior leaders make effective use of the school's electronic recording system and this ensures that records are well kept. Leaders show tenacity when working with external agencies to assure themselves that everything is done to minimise risks to pupils. This is particularly the case with regard to any child who is at risk of missing education.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed. Pupils value the opportunities that they have to work with staff who support their social and emotional needs. A particular strength of the school is the promotion of respect and tolerance across a wide range of cultures. This leads to strong relationships between pupils and staff.

Inspection findings

- Initially, we considered how leaders are ensuring that pupils of middle ability, particularly girls, are challenged in writing. In 2018, outcomes in writing improved from the previous year. While girls' attainment in writing was high, the progress that they made by the end of key stage 2 was below that of boys.

- Leaders have continued to improve the way in which writing is taught. Teachers are focusing in more detail upon the way in which pupils use grammar, punctuation and spelling across the curriculum. They also ensure that written tasks have a clear and meaningful purpose. For example, using the First World War topic as a focus for a letter. This provided all pupils with a specific audience and the opportunity to convey their emotions about war effectively through the use of more advanced vocabulary. Because of these improvements, girls currently are now making better progress in their writing.
- Teachers make good use of their planning to enable pupils to apply their written skills across the curriculum. An important ingredient in this improvement is an emphasis on providing pupils with a wider range of thought-provoking texts from which they can develop their writing. We saw examples of very effective writing in both Year 1 and Year 6. Teachers encourage pupils to write about things that are based upon real-life experience, such as the sensations that arise after tasting different fruit. They are motivated about their work and this supports the progress that they make.
- Subject leaders, some of them new to post, have benefited from the opportunities given to them to monitor their subjects. They use this information to develop pupils' ability to improve the quality of their written work. This is particularly the case with pupils making more adventurous vocabulary choices. Subject leaders have a clear vision for their subject and show capacity for continued improvement. Because of this, the quality of teaching and learning over time is consistently good.
- Second, I considered how leaders are ensuring that boys in the early years and key stage 1 are being challenged, with a particular focus upon writing and mathematics. In 2018, boys did less well than girls by the end of early years. Leaders in early years have raised their expectations of what current children can achieve. They have also made good use of external support to improve the provision for boys. Because of this, the attainment of boys currently in early years is closer to that of girls. Although improving, the quality of resources that are available for boys to use while they are learning outside in early years does not always meet their needs.
- In 2018, despite being well above the national figure for writing by the end of key stage 1 for all pupils, the attainment of boys was below that of girls. Leaders have focused upon planning clearer sequences of learning in writing for boys across key stage 1. Boys make good use of their individual targets which enable them to improve or think more deeply about their written work. They are motivated and interested by the work that they do and are able to make good progress, particularly in Year 1. This is because of teachers' consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the effective use of time. This enables pupils in Year 1 to make good progress.
- Finally, I considered how well governors hold leaders to account for improving outcomes for pupils. In particular, I looked at how current pupils, including a small number of pupils who are disadvantaged, are being challenged to reach the higher standards in writing. In 2018, while the progress made by pupils at the end of key stage 2 in writing was slightly above the national average, it was still

below the strong progress seen in both reading and mathematics. A similar picture was seen in key stage 1.

- Governors ensure that they hold leaders to account to maintain high standards of teaching and learning for current pupils. They check leaders' assessments of the quality of teaching and follow this up with rigorous scrutiny of pupils' work. Pupils currently at the school, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress, particularly in their writing. They make good use of the resources available to them to develop their word choices and to improve their spelling. In addition, all pupils show very positive attitudes towards their learning. This enables them to make better progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- examples of high-quality practice continue to be shared with teachers so that more pupils make rapid and sustained progress
- learning experiences of children in the Reception Class continue to be extended through richer and more stimulating opportunities in the outdoor learning area.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Jordan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you and other senior leaders. I met with your early years, English, and mathematics leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. I spoke to representatives of the governing body and the school improvement partner. I made visits to lessons to observe learning, accompanied by senior leaders, and talked to a wide range of pupils. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

I looked at a range of documents, which included the school's self-evaluation and the current school development plan. I looked at progress and attendance information. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children. I took account of 34 responses to the Parent View online survey and the 16 responses to the staff survey.