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Mrs Suzette Harris
St Edward's Catholic Junior School
Hazell Avenue
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Dear Mrs Harris

Short inspection of St Edward's Catholic Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You are ambitious for your school and work hard to make the improvements that are needed. You have skilfully used the talents of your leadership team, including subject leaders, to ensure that St Edwards continues to improve. You know what your school does well and what could be done even better.

Your persistent efforts to work more closely with your local infant school have resulted in staff working more collaboratively to develop a curriculum that will enhance and extend pupils' learning. For example, your focus on the teaching of writing has impacted significantly on pupils' achievements in writing and the strong progress that they make. This is because teachers have consistent expectations of what pupils can achieve, and teach lessons that give pupils more opportunities to extend their writing skills.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has accelerated. The majority of pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, many pupils are achieving standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are at least in line with those expected for their age. Targeted support for disadvantaged pupils is helping them to catch up more quickly. This has been particularly effective in reading.

Pupils work hard and have positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate hard in

lessons and their behaviour is good. They respect each other's ideas and work well together. Pupils want to do well, and the vast majority of them produce work that they are, rightly, very proud of. For example, pupils at the end of Year 3 enjoyed sharing their 'Big Friendly Giant' booklets with their parents at an open day, and now the booklets are in the library for others to enjoy.

Governors provide you with good support and also offer robust challenge to ensure that you and your leaders are held to account for pupils' outcomes. You work together very effectively to review the school's well-targeted improvement plan and evaluate the impact of your work to improve pupils' progress and attainment. Governors keep their knowledge and skills up to date through regular training, including safeguarding training. Governors are committed to spending time in school when they can. Their work with the pupil parliament to draw up an 'equalities charter' and an 'anti-bullying policy' is just one example of how committed they are to working with pupils and staff to improve the school.

The majority of parents are supportive of the work you are doing to improve the school and believe that their children are safe and are well supported to make good progress in their learning. However, some parents and pupils do not feel that incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with well by leaders. Your policies and practice are not well understood by everyone and do not always make the positive differences that they are intended to make.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve aspects of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers regularly checked on how well pupils were learning and that they developed pupils' thinking. Subject leaders were asked to check the quality of teaching more regularly. You were also asked to increase the rate at which pupils learn in writing across Years 3 and 4. In the lessons I visited, and from my scrutiny of pupils' work, it is evident that in the majority of lessons teachers assess pupils' learning well and use questioning skilfully to check on pupils' understanding. Your English coordinator has a very accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning because he regularly checks the progress pupils are making in their reading and their writing. He has been instrumental in driving forward the improvements in writing across the curriculum in all year groups. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop writing for a range of purposes and in a range of subjects. They skilfully review their writing as a matter of course so that they can improve it.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have detailed and effective record-keeping systems and ensure that all staff know exactly what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's safety. Any concerns are followed up swiftly. You are not afraid to challenge decisions made by external professionals and to make representations on behalf of pupils. The designated safeguarding governor reviews and audits the school's procedures regularly and keeps a check that any identified actions are carried out in good time. Your curriculum equips pupils to keep themselves safe. Pupils speak confidently

about how to stay safe when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked at: pupils' safety and behaviour; the progress that pupils are making to strengthen their writing, particularly in Years 3 and 4; how leaders are maintaining the good progress made by the most able pupils; and the impact of leaders' work on reducing fixed-term exclusions.
- You work hard to make sure that every pupil is safe in school. Working in conjunction with governors and the pupil parliament, you have established systems and processes to check and challenge any unacceptable behaviour. You monitor pupils' behaviour carefully, and incidents of misbehaviour have reduced in number over the previous two years. However, during my conversations with some pupils and parents it is clear that some of them do not understand the current systems and believe that they are not working effectively. Members of the pupil parliament were very clear about how things could be improved and had some very good suggestions which they expressed very eloquently.
- Leaders and teachers are working hard to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across the curriculum. This was seen in a Year 4 writing task in which pupils were revisiting their compositions and making improvements to them. Pupils worked well in the calm environment. They benefited from clear, simple guidance as it was needed, knew exactly what their teacher expected of them and were keen to do their best
- Pupils' success in writing is shared and celebrated, and pupils keenly show off their work, some of which is displayed around the school.
- Teaching is effective. Teachers plan engaging activities that encourage pupils to find things out for themselves. Pupils' science books show that pupils have various opportunities to develop their scientific knowledge and understanding through 'hands-on' experiences and investigations. Records of such activities are recorded precisely and accurately.
- The most able pupils continue to achieve well because teachers have very high expectations and plan activities that challenge pupils fully.
- Leaders' work to ensure that assessments are robust and accurate is ongoing. There are regular opportunities for staff to moderate pupils' work across all age groups. This is done within school, but also across different partnerships of schools. As a result, teachers are becoming more accurate in assessing pupils' learning and identifying any gaps. You have accurately identified that this remains an area of focus so that pupils at risk of underachievement can be identified more quickly.
- You no longer issue fixed-term exclusions because you want pupils to be in school and learning every day. You have established good support for pupils with emotional and learning needs through the nurture group and the work of the newly appointed learning mentor. As a result, pupils who need additional support with their work receive it. Pupils' attendance is monitored rigorously and any absenteeism is swiftly challenged. Attendance is currently good.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that there is a shared understanding of the school's behaviour policy by:

- communicating more effectively with parents to strengthen their partnership with the school
- ensuring that pupils' views are listened to and acted upon more effectively.
- continuing to develop teachers' assessment skills so that pupils at risk of underachievement can be identified more quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Varnom
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, your bursar, a representative from the local authority and four governors. At these meetings we reviewed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Together with you, I walked around the school to observe learning in a number of classrooms. I spoke to parents and pupils. Together with your English and assessment coordinators, I scrutinised learning in a number of pupils' books and compared it with your assessment information. I reviewed a range of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; records of behaviour and racist incidents; records of governor meetings and visits; governors' self-evaluation and audits of effectiveness; records of pupils' attendance; and documents related to keeping pupils safe. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.

I looked at 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the written comments of 22 parents and one email submitted by a parent. I also looked at the 14 returns to the staff survey. I met with members of the pupil parliament from Years 5 and 6.