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Mr James Shingler  
Headteacher  
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Hunter Road  
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Dear Mr Shingler

### **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 June 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your recent appointment, you have built further on the good work of the school.

Outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have significantly improved since 2017 in the most recent unpublished tests. The good outcomes in reading and writing have also been maintained.

Leaders, including subject leaders, ensure that pupils enjoy a rich and varied diet of different subjects including art, technology, humanities, languages and music, alongside the core subjects. Most of the pupils spoken to said they enjoy all their subjects equally.

Parents responding to surveys said that this is a kind, caring and supportive school, especially for those pupils who have additional needs. All staff responding to their survey said they were proud to work in the school.

At the last inspection inspectors recommended that the school should accelerate the rate of progress in writing. This was achieved so that in 2016 and 2017 progress in writing, including for boys, was above the national average. Unpublished results for 2018 indicate that progress in writing was still above average but not as high as in the two previous years. Inspectors also recommended that the school make more rigorous checks on teaching and learning and that subject leaders should be clear about what improvements were needed in their areas of responsibility.

This has been achieved through regular joint observations and work scrutiny with senior and subject leaders working together. All subject leaders now set action plans with priorities for improvement.

In the most recent unpublished results at the end of key stage 2 the proportion of pupils achieving a higher standard in reading and mathematics and working in greater depth in writing was low. Leaders and governors' evaluation of the impact of additional special educational needs and pupil premium funding was underdeveloped. Information that schools are required by the Department for Education (DfE) to publish on the website, including for the curriculum, was either incomplete or not up to date.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The culture of safeguarding in the school is one of 'log everything', however small or inconsequential the issue may appear. A new electronic recording system enables staff to record concerns quickly and easily to alert leaders immediately of any issues. Leaders follow up any concerns promptly and make referrals in a very timely manner. Leaders are well trained and are fully aware of the latest guidance, consequently they know how to fulfil their responsibilities. All staff receive regular training and know what to do should a safeguarding incident arise. Governors ensure that they have safeguarding as a top priority. They carry out checks on school records regularly and assiduously to ensure that leaders carry out their statutory duties.

Pupils spoken to felt very safe in the school because of the steps taken by leaders to make the site secure. They also reported that they have been taught to keep themselves safe when they are on their own. Year 6 pupils receive a letter when, in the view of the school, they have demonstrated that they have sufficient road safety knowledge. They know not to give personal details when they receive messages on the internet or through social media from someone they do not know. Parents responding to their surveys confirmed that their children feel safe in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- Unpublished results suggest that outcomes at the end of key stage 2 significantly improved in mathematics in 2018. Pupils made good progress by the end of key stage 2 to the extent that outcomes in mathematics exceeded those of reading and writing. Leaders had placed a strong emphasis on mathematics as key priority throughout the school. They have set high expectations for what they expect to see in mathematics lessons. Additional adults have been well trained in mathematics programmes used by the school to support pupils. Strong teaching in upper key stage 2 has also contributed to accelerated outcomes for pupils. In Year 6, pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject. They respond eagerly to tasks and collaborate well with each to solve problems and prove their answer.

- Although the outcomes in mathematics improved in 2018, the proportion achieving the higher standard in mathematics and reading, and greater depth in writing, fell significantly compared to 2017. However, the proportion of pupils achieving a high standard in English grammar, punctuation and spelling remained very high and improved on outcomes in 2017. Leaders are now directing their energies to improving outcomes further for most-able pupils.
- Pupils have access to a wide and varied range of subjects through a balanced curriculum. Pupils spoken to were enthusiastic about their history work commemorating the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War in Year 2. Cross-curricular work promotes links well with English and mathematics. For example, map work in Year 5 geography uses four- and six-figure grid references to promote numeracy. In the same subject route planning promotes pupils' computing skills. Pupils in Reception are handling money and using appropriate vocabulary through selling tickets at the box office for their theatre production. Pupils also have the opportunity for extended writing in religious education, for example the story of Joseph in Year 4. Writing a travel diary in geography also supports their literacy. The Friday afternoon activities are popular with pupils and most (but not all) parents, where pupils can enjoy additional experiences such as gardening, design and German.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and have a good understanding of the priorities in their subject areas. For most subjects this concerns improving outcomes for most-able pupils. Subject leaders have contributed to whole-staff training on expectations for teaching in each subject and, where necessary, have provided subject-specific support for teachers. They have been engaged in joint lesson observations and the scrutiny of books with senior leaders so that they are well informed on the strengths and areas for development in teaching in their subject. Leaders have access to teachers' long term-planning but had not picked up on gaps on the school website. Curriculum information published on the website is incomplete and out of date and does not reflect the interesting work pupils are currently doing.
- Leaders work well with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those pupils demonstrating challenging behaviour. One-to-one support, where appropriate for those with education, health and care plans, is effective in improving pupils' behaviour and outcomes. There has been a reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions this term. Pupils reported that behaviour has improved. Parents responding to surveys commended leaders for their work with children with additional needs. An additional support programme of 20-minute literacy and numeracy sessions takes place for some pupils in the afternoon when their classes are studying subjects other than English and mathematics. The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of this additional support on overall outcomes for pupils with SEND is at an early stage of development. Links between special educational needs leaders and the governing body are limited. Leaders have not published an evaluation of the impact of special educational needs funding on the website, as required by the DfE.
- Information published on the website evaluating the impact of the pupil premium

on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is out of date. Governors spoken to were unsure how much funding the school receives, how many pupils are eligible and how the money is making a difference. Governors were also unaware of gaps on the website. However, they have a good knowledge of other aspects of the work of the school and know the school's strengths and areas for development well.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of most-able pupils working in greater depth in writing and at a higher standard in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 improves to be at least in line with the national average
- they monitor and evaluate more effectively the impact of additional funding for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils and publish this information on the website
- information published on the website is up to date and meets the DfE requirements on information schools must publish on the curriculum, provision for pupils with SEND, the use of pupil premium and governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders, and members of the teaching staff. I also met with two members of the governing body, including the chair. I spoke by telephone to a representative of the diocese and also to a representative from the local authority.

I carried out a learning walk of lessons jointly with you, which included scrutinising pupils' books and talking to pupils.

I observed pupils' behaviour around the school. I spoke to a group of pupils from the Reception to Year 6 classes.

I took account of 22 responses to Parent View and 18 responses to the Parent View

free-text service. I also reviewed 17 responses to the staff survey and 37 responses to the pupil survey.

I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, pupil performance information, information about pupils' behaviour, and school policy documents as well as safeguarding and child protection records. I also checked the school's website.