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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

The leadership team has created an enriching learning environment that captures pupils' interests and motivates them to learn well. Pupils love learning and have the confidence to try new things to enhance what they learn in lessons. For example, pupils have many opportunities to develop as musicians. The school orchestra is a popular enrichment activity that includes a range of instruments such as brass, woodwind and strings. Similarly, the well-attended school choir attracts many pupils to take part in special events, such as singing at a local charity event promoting social justice. Pupils told me that they particularly value the many special days during which they focus on certain aspects of the curriculum, both in school and during educational visits. Pupils' work shows that they benefit from the many experiences and events they take part in. For example, earlier this term, Year 6 pupils developed their writing as a result of watching a professional theatre production and taking part in practical drama workshops.

Pupils live up to the school's deeply rooted values. Pupils described to me very clearly how they try to fill each other's 'emotional buckets' with acts of kindness so that all pupils can be happy at school. Pupils also explained how they value the many opportunities to support charities and care for people in need. Behaviour is strong in lessons, on the playground and when pupils move around the school. Most respondents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed that the school makes sure that its pupils behave well. Pupils reported that on the rare occasion someone misbehaves, teachers deal with it effectively and it does

not happen again.

Leaders have been effective in resolving the areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection report. The actions of leaders have ensured that the most able pupils are taught in line with their high abilities. Teachers provide the most able with greater challenge and their progress is improving. Attainment is also improving as seen in the school's published assessment information. For example, in 2018, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who attained greater depth and the higher standards was higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and considerably higher in reading and writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors place great importance on keeping children safe from harm. Leaders train staff to look for and deal with safeguarding concerns effectively. Staff are watchful for safeguarding risks and signs of harm and act appropriately when concerns arise. Leaders make sure that they keep aware of any local risks in their community such as those associated with social media. Teachers regularly teach children how to stay safe online.

Leaders accurately assess and put in place effective measures to reduce risks. Any potential hazards relating to the shared drop-off location with a neighbouring school and the shared field with another neighbouring school are well managed to keep pupils safe.

Leaders carry out all the checks required to ensure that adults are suitable to work with pupils. The record of these checks is meticulously maintained and reviewed regularly by governors.

Inspection findings

- Leaders identify in the school development plan the need to improve mathematics. Pupils make similar progress to those in most other schools nationally across key stage 2 and attain above national averages by the end of Year 6. Nonetheless, leaders are ambitious for pupils to make better progress. In September 2018, leaders introduced a new research-informed approach. I wanted to see how well these changes were improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics.
- The approach to mathematics chosen by leaders is working in the classes where this approach is embedded well. In these classes, pupils understand mathematics better and have greater ability to articulate their mathematical thinking. As a result, they are able to reason better and solve complex problems. These improvements are further supported by new strategies to teach pupils to calculate efficiently. Pupils understand number facts well, including number bonds and multiplication tables, and this also helps them to reason more effectively.
- The most able pupils report that they like the way they are taught in mathematics. These pupils understand the purpose of the new methods and use them well to deepen their thinking about mathematics. Work in books shows that the most able pupils make substantially greater progress as a result of the developments introduced.
- However, the new approach to teaching mathematics is not embedded fully across the

school. While some teachers are very proficient in the new strategies, others are less so. As a result, leaders' intended improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics is variable.

- I also looked at the action leaders are taking to improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders' actions are particularly effective for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. When staff recognise these needs, leaders quickly provide bespoke support, and this ensures that any barriers to learning are addressed quickly. Leaders have also enabled staff to teach pupils how to reflect on and self-manage negative emotions so that their learning is not disrupted. For example, leaders have introduced a shared vocabulary across the school to enable pupils to discuss their emotions when they find their learning too difficult. Pupils speak with confidence about how they learn from their mistakes without negative consequences to their self-esteem.
- Leaders work closely with parents, carers and external specialists to ensure that they identify barriers to learning with great accuracy for pupils with SEND. Leaders seek out and put into place quickly the most effective practices to support pupils with their individual needs. This support usually leads to improved progress for these pupils. Leaders, however, do not consistently identify when provision is no longer effective in meeting the changing needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, the provision is not adjusted accordingly and some pupils do not make the progress that they should.
- Finally, I looked at the actions leaders are taking to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. These pupils value school and take part fully in the curriculum, including after-school clubs. They enjoy their learning and work hard in lessons. Leaders' use of the government's pupil premium funding removes many of the barriers faced by these pupils. For example, the breakfast club has ensured that many disadvantaged pupils start the school day ready for the demands of their learning. Similarly, learning mentors successfully support some disadvantaged pupils in school, which benefits most of them in making strong progress.
- In reading, writing and mathematics, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is varied. Some are doing very well, while others less so. Leaders' support for those doing less well in reading, writing and mathematics has not yet led to the majority of disadvantaged pupils making the progress that they should.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recently introduced approaches to teaching mathematics are firmly fixed in all classes so that pupils consistently achieve well
- the provision for pupils with SEND is monitored closely so that the support they receive is effective and they make good progress across the school
- well-considered support for disadvantaged pupils is consistently in place so that the majority achieve well.

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

Yours sincerely

Al Mistrano
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, other members of the leadership team, members of the governing body, staff, pupils and parents. We observed learning and teaching in all year groups. With you and other members of your leadership team, I scrutinised pupils' work in English, mathematics, and geography and history.

I looked at a range of documents, including the records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, a sample of documentation regarding the provision for pupils with SEND, leaders' self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.

I considered the 117 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and the 19 responses to the online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.