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15 January 2019

Mrs Catherine Dalzell
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Dear Mrs Dalzell

Short inspection of Maryvale Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have continued to make improvements across all aspects of school life. You have high expectations of pupils and are well supported by a capable leadership team. A sense of teamwork and community permeates the school. Typical comments from parents reflect the ethos of the school, such as: 'staff are caring and understanding – there is a family feel' and 'Teachers go that extra-yard for the pupils.'

In response to priorities identified at the previous inspection, the capacity and effectiveness of the leadership team have been improved. Leaders who are knowledgeable and reflective know their areas of responsibility well and constantly seek to make improvements to the school. All leaders are involved in the monitoring of teaching. Checks are regular and provide precise feedback for staff on how to improve. As a result, weaknesses in teaching are quickly addressed and teaching continues to develop.

Pupils work hard in lessons and behave well. They enjoy learning and work in their books shows that they make good progress. Teachers use good questions to check and deepen pupils' understanding in lessons. In recent years you have put in place a lot of new teaching approaches. Some of these approaches are yet to be fully embedded. Consequently, some pupils, including the most able, are not challenged

as much as they should be. For example, in mathematics pupils' reasoning skills are not sufficiently developed.

You have ensured that the quality of pastoral support for pupils is high. At the core of this support are staff's positive relationships with pupils. They know pupils well and place high importance on pupils' emotional well-being. This is backed up well by other members of staff who provide additional help. Family support and play therapy is used well to support vulnerable pupils.

The wider curriculum was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. There are now clear curriculum maps in place for each year group and pupils' knowledge develops well across foundation subjects. Pupils enjoy subject focus weeks because they get deeply immersed in subject content. A broad range of trips also helps to bring relevance to the curriculum. Pupils talked enthusiastically about visits to Birmingham Art Gallery and Museum, Cannock Chase for a 'Saxon settler experience', to a courthouse for a crime topic, and to the Houses of Parliament.

Pupils' personal development is well considered. The Catholic faith is central to the school's ethos, but other religions are also taught well. Pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and develop tolerant attitudes. You also ensure that pupils get a range of opportunities to play competitive sports against other schools and to take on responsibility. Pupils spoke with pride about being house captains or supporting children in the early years during lunchtime.

You have improved the quality of the outdoor area in the early years. Children enjoy learning in the construction area, the physical play section and in the writing zone. Adults ensure that children are settled and happy in the early years. Phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) teaching is strong and the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen.

The governing body provides a high level of challenge and support. They are well led and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. For example, governors highlighted clearly that by the end of key stage 2 more pupils should be attaining the higher standards expected for their age.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all the arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. Leaders, governors and staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Staff receive regular updates and training and, as a result, have a good understanding of their responsibilities. Designated safeguarding leads are quick to follow up on concerns and record-keeping is well organised. You escalate matters when you feel that external agencies are not taking your concerns seriously enough.

The school e-cadets are a group of pupils who have responsibility for teaching other pupils about how to stay safe online. They are knowledgeable and enjoy the responsibility that they are given. Other pupils have a good understanding of how to

stay safe online and are clear about important messages, such as not sharing personal information online. Pupils know what the different forms of bullying are and how important it is to inform a trusted adult if they see bullying taking place or if they ever experience it themselves.

Inspection findings

- The proportions of pupils attaining at the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 and 2 have increased and have been broadly in line with the national average over the last few years. The proportions of pupils attaining standards higher than expected for their age have been low compared to the national average. You have ensured that challenge for the most able pupils is a priority on your school improvement plan. Sometimes the most able pupils do not receive a high enough level of challenge. In mathematics some questions are too easy for the most able pupils and they do not practise their mathematical reasoning skills enough.
- The teaching of reading has been improved. You made the decision to move to a new whole-class reading approach to teach different reading comprehension skills. Teachers are helping pupils to develop a wider range of vocabulary by using high-quality texts. Pupils use their 'treasure books' well in class, recording new and exciting words that they have learned. Pupils are also becoming more proficient at answering questions about the text, particularly when retrieving simple information. Sometimes pupils do not receive sufficient opportunities to answer questions involving the more challenging skill of inference.
- You have improved the culture for reading across the school. Several effective initiatives have been introduced, including a day where different members of the school community read to pupils. However, systems for hearing pupils read individually are not consistently well organised. The completion of reading records is patchy and some weaker readers are not being read to by an adult on a regular basis. As a result, some pupils' reading fluency is not developing as well as it should. Some pupils are reading books from schemes that are too easy for them, which stops them moving on to rich and more challenging texts.
- In 2016/17 pupil absence levels dipped and were below that national average. However, during last academic year, and so far this year, absence levels have risen closer to the national average.
- You have developed the leadership capacity in the school very well. Senior and middle leaders are regularly and meaningfully involved in school improvement. Leaders are well supported through nationally recognised training courses. You have also made good use of external support to help validate the work that you are doing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the systems for hearing pupils read individually are more organised

- pupils' individual reading books are suitably interesting and challenging
- the teaching of inference skills in reading are improved
- the teaching of mathematics is more challenging, particularly in relation to developing pupils' reasoning skills.

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 and several other leaders. I met with four governors and an external adviser who supports your school. We spoke to pupils informally and formally. We made short visits to eight lessons and looked at a range of pupils' books. We spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered nine free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses from Ofsted's online questionnaires for pupils and staff.