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Mrs Dianne Stokes
Headteacher
St Dominic's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Stokes

Short inspection of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 2019, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2012

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You know your school well and from the outset of the inspection, you demonstrated an honest and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.

You are relentless in your drive for improvement and make sure that the school goes the extra mile to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. Together with a dedicated deputy headteacher, determined senior leaders and a skilled chief executive officer (CEO) of the Painsley Catholic Academy (the multi-academy company), of which the school is a member, you have ensured that the school continues to improve at a fast pace. Standards across school are excellent, with pupils' performance at the end of key stages broadly at, but mostly above, national figures year on year.

Leaders have put well-informed plans in place to secure ongoing and ambitious school improvement. These plans are underpinned by a comprehensive monitoring and support programme that ensures high standards are maintained. Leaders have supported and coached staff in order for them to develop their skills.

Governors are highly knowledgeable and bring a wealth of expertise to the school. They provide appropriate challenge and ask the right questions of senior leaders. They are appreciative of your work and keen to continue to support the work leaders are doing.

The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their children were happy at the school and all said their children were safe in school. One parent I spoke to said that her child 'loved' coming to school and another said that the staff were 'brilliant' in supporting her child with a specific learning need.

Pupils are articulate and able to express their views and opinions clearly, but also listen well in class. All the children I spoke to during the inspection are proud of their school and teachers. They said that any issues are dealt with quickly and that they would have no hesitation in telling an adult if they were worried about anything. They also told me how they enjoyed learning about other faiths during multi-faith week and how the school does not accept intolerant behaviour. Older children explained how they take it upon themselves to help staff ensure good behaviour during playtimes because 'it is the right thing to do'.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection.

Pupils' work showed how well teachers develop pupils' accurate use of punctuation, both discretely and through writing tasks. The success of this work is evident in the fact that all pupils achieved the expected standard in spelling, punctuation and grammar at the end of key stage 2 last year. The most able pupils are routinely challenged to improve their writing through differentiated expectations and tasks. The impact of this work can be seen both in pupils' books and also in the significant number of children who exceeded the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 2 last year.

In all the lessons I observed, teachers were very effective in using a variety of questions to challenge learning, probe thinking and ascertain the learning taking place. This resulted in pupils who were on task, responded positively to the teaching and made informed decisions.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors receive regular training so that their knowledge of good practice in safeguarding is kept up to date. They have a clear understanding of what to do if they are worried about a pupil's well-being, and leaders ensure that any concerns are swiftly followed up. Leaders also ensure that appropriate checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school to make sure that they are suitable people to work with children.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and trust their teachers to look after them well. They have a good understanding of what bullying is, but are confident that bullying is extremely rare in their school. Pupils also understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations, such as when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these looked at how well the school is diminishing the difference in outcomes between different groups of pupils and ensuring sufficient challenge for all pupils at the end of key stage 1. The school has had some success in this area. This is the result of focused pupil progress meetings, refining pupil tracking systems, providing teachers with time-related targets in relation to the required progress for individual pupils, and updating resources available to staff and pupils. This work has been overseen by the CEO of the multi-academy company (MAC), who has ensured rigour and challenge. Even though there has been some success, there is more work to be done and diminishing the differences in outcomes between different groups, particularly between boys and girls, continues to be a target for the school.
- My second key line of enquiry focused on pupils' progress in writing across key stage 2. Pupils' attainment in writing at expected and greater depth was above the national average at the end of key stage 2 last year, but progress was average and below that of reading and mathematics. In order to address this, the writing curriculum has been redesigned over the last few years. Provision for writing now includes: 'Wow' days – where the whole school engage in enrichment activities related to English, further cross-curricular links, a greater focus on text immersion, individual pupil targets based on previous performance, and updated resources. Evidence from a range of sources, including the school environment, lesson observations, pupils' books and internal monitoring, showed the positive impact of this work. Writing is celebrated in classrooms and throughout the school. Due to effective staff feedback, pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve and are able to discuss the content of their work in depth. Teachers show good subject knowledge and share the purpose behind activities. The impact of this work to improve pupils' progress in writing was evident in most classes. However, it is clear that not all teachers are consistently applying the school's improvement strategies. This is an ongoing target for the school.
- The third key line of enquiry looked at the impact of leaders' actions in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The inspection highlighted how the leadership team have made great strides in improving the quality of teaching and learning, which has led to excellent standards across school.
- Teaching is getting stronger over time due to your high expectations. The systematic, whole-school approaches to teaching mean that pupils have a smooth journey as they move from class to class. Teachers are aware of their targets and what they have to do to improve. This is the case for both experienced and newly qualified staff.

- You have looked outside the school to ensure that your judgements in relation to attainment and progress are correct. The use of external advisers and moderation across schools in the MAC allows leaders to compare pupils' work with that of pupils in other schools and adapt provision as required.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous. Leaders are vigilant and ensure that any development points for teaching staff are completed within an agreed timeframe, while offering clear guidance and support for staff who need it. Consequently, pupils achieve extremely well at the end of all key stages. Leaders and governors know where the strengths and weaknesses of the school lie and have clear plans in place.
- Teaching and learning at St Dominic's is underpinned by positive experiences for pupils. On the day of the inspection, Year 6 pupils visited the Staffordshire County Showground to perform a composition they had created with other Staffordshire schools. Children I spoke to were enthusiastic about their trip to the theatre to watch 'Wind in the willows' and described how it informed their schoolwork. Vibrant displays in school highlight work done in relation to raising money for charity, British values, the school curriculum and school clubs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue their work to diminish the difference in achievement between key groups of pupils, particularly boys and girls, across school
- the very best practice in the school is consistently applied in all year groups.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the chief executive of the multi-academy company, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nadeem Bhatti
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the CEO of the MAC, senior leaders, staff and governors. I carried out short observations of teaching and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I talked with pupils in lessons and met with a group of pupils to gather their views. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.

By the end of the inspection, there were 65 recent responses to Parent View,

Ofsted's online questionnaire, 14 responses to the staff survey and 45 responses to the pupil survey. I took account of these responses as well as the conversations with parents on the morning of the inspection and any emails sent to Ofsted by parents on the day of the inspection.

I looked at several documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, development plans and a range of school records. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe. I discussed safeguarding matters with members of staff, pupils and parents.