

22 March 2019

Mr Dominic McBride
Headteacher
St Marie's Catholic Primary School and Nursery
Merttens Drive
Rugby
Warwickshire
CV22 7AF

Dear Mr McBride

Short inspection of St Marie's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 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 especially strengthened leadership and further improved teaching. You have created a culture where pupils are happy, their talents are celebrated and parents are included as partners in their children's education. The parents I spoke with were full of praise for the school. 'Both my children have [thrived] and are continuing to thrive being in this school. The staff are friendly, approachable and highly competent in their roles' was a typical comment from parents.

St Marie's Primary is a welcoming and friendly school. During the inspection, it was clear that pupils are excited about their learning. The environment and classroom displays are testament to the rich and broad curriculum. Throughout the school, the overwhelming majority of pupils in every class focus intently on their activities and are willing to discuss their learning. As one pupil told the inspector, 'Teachers always think of many interesting ways to make our learning fun and memorable.'

Pupils enjoy positive relationships with adults. They respond quickly to direction from adults, often without any prompting. They are eager to learn and keen to do their best. They willingly contribute to class discussions and reflect thoughtfully on the views of others. During the inspection many were keen to explain the meaning of 'ASPIRE', the inspirational school acronym, standing for achievement, serving God, practice, independence, resilience and enjoyment. Almost all parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agree that pupils are well looked after and happy at school.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders check and evaluate the information they collect to ensure that they focus on the right priorities and address any issues.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to check more effectively the quality of the contribution made by teaching assistants and other adults in the classroom so that the pupils in their charge make faster progress. As a result of carefully planned, bespoke training, teaching assistants and other adults in the room work highly effectively with their targeted pupils, ensuring that they are given every opportunity to make even better progress.

The leadership team was also asked to improve the provision for outdoor learning in the early years, to further promote children's physical development. This has been carried out, with a recent refurbishment of the outdoor area. Children now benefit immensely from learning in an exciting, stimulating outdoor space where appropriate equipment provides opportunities for them to climb safely, explore and improve their physical development.

Governors have a very impressive understanding of the school's strengths and further areas for improvement. The information they receive is of high quality and enables them to challenge and support school leaders effectively. They are rightly proud of the important role the school plays in the local community.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated lead for safeguarding, you have ensured that all arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are effective. Careful checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are made. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The governing body has rigorous systems for checking that safeguarding procedures are up to date and effective. Regular training ensures that staff, including those new to the school, are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They understand the importance of taking prompt action when they have any concerns about pupils.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They said that they understand the different types of bullying and that how, on the rare occasions bullying does occur, you work quickly to resolve situations. Pupils described the many opportunities that they have to learn about how to keep safe inside and outside school, including when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection we agreed to focus on the following aspects: the effectiveness of teaching in both phases; children's progress in the early years; teaching of phonics; and reasons for the higher-than-national-average figures for 2016/17 fixed-term exclusions.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in reading, writing and mathematics, although improving over the past three years, remains below that found nationally. Evidence seen during our visits to all classrooms, talking to pupils and looking at their books, and supported by the school's assessment information, indicates that improvement continues. The vast majority of pupils are making good and sometimes very strong progress from their starting points. However, in mathematics, pupils, particularly the most able, could be further challenged to ensure that they achieve their maximum potential.
- The next area I looked at related to children's attainment in the early years. You have correctly identified this as a priority. The quality of teaching in the early years has improved enormously as a result of staff training. Evidence seen during the inspection shows that children's attainment is now rising year on year. As soon as children begin school, adults rightly emphasise their language development, and children are encouraged to talk in full sentences and listen to others. There is a clear focus on all pupils being rigorously challenged, and an expectation that they will move on, when ready, to the next stage of development. Leaders acknowledge, however, that there is still more to do. In a few classes in early years and key stage 1, pupils' progress could be strengthened further to match that of older pupils in key stage 2.
- Leaders have swiftly responded to the results of the phonics screening check of 2018, which were below the national average. You rightly see the teaching of phonics as a stepping stone towards developing a passion for reading. You and the staff have made it a priority to provide a range of age-appropriate books that pupils want to read. You also work hard with parents to ensure they, too, encourage their children to read as much as possible at home. Consequently, pupils' progress in reading is improving strongly.
- In the 2016/17 academic year, there was a relatively high number of exclusions. However, there were valid reasons for the action that you took. Decisions to exclude pupils are not taken lightly and exclusion is used as a last resort. Due to good-quality pastoral support, the number of exclusions has reduced. You make good use of external agencies to provide appropriate support for pupils with complex needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff's expectations are raised in order to strengthen learning for some children in early years and key stage 1, to match that of pupils in key stage 2
- teachers plan activities that consistently challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to think hard about their learning in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Steven Cartlidge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you and other leaders. Together with a senior leader, we visited classes to observe pupils' learning and scrutinised their work. I talked to pupils in lessons and in a meeting, when I listened to their views of the school and listened to some of them read. A wide range of documentary evidence was scrutinised, including information about pupils' performance, the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and safeguarding documentation. I met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I looked at your records for teaching, learning and assessment and documents for the governing body. I took account of 37 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 33 free-text comments and a letter from a parent. I also considered the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire and 31 questionnaire responses from pupils.