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Ms Joy Agbonlahor
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Agbonlahor

Short inspection of Sacred Heart Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment in January 2019, you have worked hard to raise expectations across the school. Although you have only been the headteacher for a few months, you can already demonstrate some impact. Your expectations are high and you take swift action when you find things that are not right or do not meet with your expectations. 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 of development.

Committed senior leaders who have worked with you to improve the rigour and effectiveness of monitoring and staff development ably support you. Although there is evidence that this work has improved the provision of the school, there is more work to be done with particular regard to raising standards across the school and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Governors agree with your appraisal of the school and can see the improvements you have already made. They are ambitious for the school and are working with the local authority to ensure that they provide the appropriate level of support and challenge.

The majority of parents I spoke to in the playground were positive about the school.

Parents cited how happy their children were and how well teachers supported them. A number of parents, including some I spoke to and those who replied to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, listed communication and homework as two areas of the school's work that could be improved. You are aware of these concerns and have plans in place to address these issues as quickly as possible.

All the pupils I spoke to during the inspection were proud of the 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. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about external school visits arranged by the school, for example how a recent Year 5 and 6 residential trip allowed them to develop friendships and improve confidence. Pupils were also keen to praise the emotional support offered by the school. They talked about how the school nurture room provided them with an effective way to manage their feelings. One child said teachers knew that even though they were all different, they were all unique.

In your previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils improved both the presentation and accuracy of their work. This inspection has identified that these areas for improvement have not been fully addressed. The presentation of pupils' work is still variable across the school, with some pupils making mistakes in their books.

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. 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. They have a good understanding of what bullying is. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare in their school and that if it does occur, they trust staff to deal with it well. Pupils also understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations, such as when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a number of key objectives. The first of these looked at the impact of leaders on improving standards across key stage 1, and diminishing the difference in attainment between boys and girls. You have initiated a number of initiatives to improve standards across key stage 1. These include: enhancing the capacity of leadership across key stage 1 through the employment of a key stage 1 leader; changing the way pupils are grouped in lessons; short-term interventions and nurture groups; being part of a local authority-sponsored writing project; and work moderation with other local schools. Although the school can demonstrate some early success with these initiatives, sustainable improvement has yet to be embedded.

- Another key line of enquiry looked at the impact of leaders on raising standards, and increasing the number of pupils working at the higher standard across key stage 2. Your improvement plans for the school acknowledge this as an area for improvement and, therefore, a number of new initiatives are now in place. These include careful tracking of pupils' progress, additional classes for those children falling behind and using senior leaders to teach key groups. Again, these strategies need time to embed to be fully successful.
- A further key line of enquiry related to how leaders have developed provision across the school since the previous inspection. Since the start of your employment at the school, you have been determined not only to raise expectations of pupils' performance across the school, but also to enhance all the processes and systems related to teaching, learning and monitoring. As a result, you and your leadership team have further utilised pupil progress meetings and developed a focused monitoring and continuing professional development programme for staff. In addition, you have used external specialists to develop staff expertise and used data to set challenging targets for pupils. Because of your focus on increasing the involvement and engagement of pupils in their learning, standards across the school are beginning to rise. However, inspection activities found that not all teachers are consistently using agreed teaching strategies. In particular, this related to some teachers missing the opportunity to move pupils onto the next stage of learning as quickly as possible.
- To further develop the capacity of leadership and management across the school, you have created a strategic role for middle leaders. They are given the support and time to monitor and support teaching and learning across school. They firmly believe in your vision for the school.
- Since your arrival at the school, you have also focused on trying to develop the social and emotional aspects of pupils' life at the school. Pupils told me how external visits, for example to Cadbury World and Royal Air Force Museum Cosford, enhanced the themes they study in class. They also value the clubs on offer by the school and, in particular, talked enthusiastically about ballet club.
- You have also ensured that a number of interventions related to social, emotional and mental health are in place for pupils. These include transition groups from Year 6 to secondary school and anger management. The school also supports the needs of parents through well-being groups and individualised support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders continue to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school by ensuring that teachers move children on in their learning at the appropriate time
- leaders improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring consistency of practice across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sandwell. 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, senior 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 12 recent responses to Parent View and 27 responses to the staff survey. I took account of these responses, as well as the conversations with parents on the morning of the inspection and a few emails sent to Ofsted by parents on the day of the inspection.

I looked at several documents, including the school's 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.