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Mr Peter Moore
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Dear Mr Moore

Short inspection of St Edward's RC School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You provide highly effective leadership and you have set a clear vision that has contributed to improving the school since the previous inspection. I was struck by the welcoming atmosphere of the school and the strong sense of care and nurture for all of your pupils. You, school leaders and governors are ambitious to achieve the best outcomes for every pupil. You know the school well. Your evaluation of the school is accurate, picking out the school's many strengths while also identifying those areas that need further work.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. At the previous inspection you were asked to ensure that pupils were always fully challenged. Regular checks by senior leaders have shown you that actions taken have made a positive difference to pupils' learning. During my visits to classes, I observed that pupils had been given challenging tasks, well-matched to their needs. Teachers and teaching assistants were on hand to give guidance, support and further challenge. Pupils' books demonstrate that they are provided with a range of demanding tasks and that they make good progress over time across a range of subjects. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved.

At the previous inspection you were also asked to ensure that the good quality writing in pupils' English books is replicated in other subjects. In order to develop

writing across a wider range of subjects you have reorganised your curriculum. There are now well-planned opportunities provided for pupils to write at length in other subjects. Pupils' books show good examples of writing in a range of subjects. For example, I read accounts of the Great Fire of London, part of a Year 2 history topic, where pupils drafted and edited their work to ensure it was of high quality. As a result of the actions you have taken, writing across a range of subjects has improved.

You and your team have established a warm and supportive learning environment that is underpinned by the school's clear Roman Catholic ethos. Staff, parents and carers have confidence and trust in the leadership of this school. Pupils are nurtured and encouraged to thrive. They develop as confident and successful learners who are keen to contribute to the school and wider community. Pupils learn to live out the school's values of 'love, learn, smile, believe'.

Your staff team is committed to helping you to improve the school. They appreciate your support and feel that the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. Members of staff are very positive about their work and staff morale is high. They appreciate the training and development opportunities that you provide, including the collaborative work with teachers in other schools. They say that it helps to develop them professionally. They also welcome the changes you have put in place which help them maintain a good work-life balance.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They share your vision to provide a high-quality education, firmly rooted in the school's Christian values. Governors have a range of skills, which they keep up to date through regular training. They visit the school regularly and are involved in evaluating school improvements. Governors meet with subject leaders to discuss the work taking place in developing areas of the curriculum. They are keen for pupils' progress to improve still further, including that of the most able pupils in mathematics.

Pupils are polite and friendly. They show respect and get on well together. They have strong supportive relationships with teachers and teaching assistants. Their behaviour in class and around the school is consistently good, and this creates a calm and purposeful environment for learning. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning. These are evident from the enthusiasm shown by children in early years in their 'fishing for numbers' activity, to the children in key stage 2 using reasoning and problem-solving skills to calculate the values of unknown angles. Pupils were keen to tell me about all the things they like about life at St Edward's. They spoke with enthusiasm about their topic work and their enjoyment of the wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips you provide for them.

Pupils I spoke to understood the principles behind tolerance of other cultures and religions. They said what mattered was that everyone was treated with equal respect. They also understood the need for rules and laws to keep everyone safe. Pupils, however, showed less understanding of British values. They were unfamiliar with what the terminology, for example, 'individual liberty' or 'democracy' meant.

You have developed good links with the community. Strong school–parent relationships have been formed, including the dedicated work of the school’s pastoral leader in supporting vulnerable families. The majority of parents were positive in their responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey. Parents find the staff approachable and believe the school is well managed. Typically, they reported that they are extremely pleased with the quality of education that the school provides.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. This aspect of the school’s work is well led and there is a strong culture for keeping children safe throughout the school. All staff are trained effectively and kept up to date about safeguarding matters. Processes for reporting issues are clear and known by staff. Referrals are timely, and appropriate action is taken if required. Leaders and staff have a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities and they follow up concerns thoroughly. Record-keeping is systematic, and information is stored securely. Appropriate checks are made on staff and visitors. Leaders, including the pastoral leader, know families and pupils well. They provide appropriate support from the school and external agencies when necessary.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe in a range of situations. For example, they learn about water and road safety and pupils are taught how to stay safe when they are using the internet.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection stated that bullying and poor behaviour are rare in the school and have confidence in the staff to deal with problems when they arise. However, a minority of parents expressed concerns over this issue. Inspection evidence shows that incidents are rare and, where they do happen, leaders work with parents and pupils to address them to the satisfaction of the majority of parents.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry looked at how pupils were enabled to reach the higher standard in mathematics. In 2017 and in 2018, although the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in mathematics was above the national average, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard in this subject was below the national average. You recognised this as an area for development and have taken prompt action. Your analysis of data showed you that pupils’ reasoning and problem-solving skills were not sufficiently well developed. The leader for mathematics has attended relevant training and has provided professional development and advice to teachers. This has enabled them to develop their expertise in teaching aspects of problem-solving and reasoning. New resources have also supported pupils’ learning. As a result, teachers now have improved skills and greater confidence in teaching these aspects of mathematics.
- The most able pupils I spoke to told me they enjoyed the challenge of the problems they are now given to solve in mathematics. Pupils show high levels of

engagement in lessons. Teachers are now providing the most able pupils with more opportunities to use their skills to solve problems and explain their methods. Teachers use questioning more effectively to draw out from pupils their reasoning for their calculations at a deeper level. Books show many pupils are now provided with problems to extend their thinking. This work is relatively new for the strategies to have raised the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics.

- My next line of enquiry focused on how you, leaders and governors use the pupil premium funding to accelerate the learning of the disadvantaged pupils. Teachers and leaders work together to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are given the right level of support. Disadvantaged pupils who are underachieving are carefully tracked and receive support through a range of strategies and interventions, enabling them to make good progress. Pupils' different, sometimes very complex, needs are met through a range of support including mentoring and family support. Pupil premium funding is used effectively to make certain that disadvantaged pupils are able to access extra-curricular activities so that no pupil misses out on the opportunities the school provides. However, discussion with leaders, and governors' minutes of their meetings, confirm that although correct actions are in place, a detailed review of the impact of actions has not been undertaken. As a result, the success or otherwise of individual strategies is unclear, even though leaders and governors have the required information available to enable them to carry out an evaluation of the impact of pupil premium spending.
- My final line of enquiry focused on the impact of subject leaders on the quality of teaching and learning in subjects other than mathematics and English. Displays around the school and work in pupils' books show that all subjects are being taught. Subject leaders are enthusiastic about their subject areas. They have had a range of monitoring opportunities, including work scrutiny and examining of teachers' plans. Some have had opportunities to observe teaching in their subject.
- The leadership of history and geography is a strength of the school. Pupils' work in these subjects shows that skills are developed from one lesson to the next. Skills are taught alongside a curriculum that is rich in knowledge. For example, pupils' work in Year 5 showed how they were able to compare two accounts of the same historical event and explain why the differences may have occurred. Key knowledge and vocabulary are provided at the start of each topic and effectively reinforced to ensure that pupils remember them. As a result, the leadership of history and geography ensures that pupils make good progress in these subjects. This success is less obvious in other subjects because leaders have not yet had the required subject training to improve their leadership roles. Some subject leaders are also new to their roles.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strengths seen in leading English, mathematics, history and geography are

extended to other subjects

- the use and impact of pupil premium funding is reviewed by governors
- the good work in developing mathematics is further embedded to enable a greater proportion of pupils to reach the higher standard
- pupils become more familiar with fundamental British values.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oldham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Aleksandra Hartshorne
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher and explained my lines of enquiry. I also met with: four members of the governing body; a representative from the local authority; the subject leaders for history, geography and design technology; and the pastoral leader. I also met with a group of 10 pupils. I took account of the 69 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 39 free-text comments. There were 15 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and six responses to the pupil questionnaire. We visited classes together in Reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and I looked at samples of pupils' work.

I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and the plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets statutory requirements on the publication of specified information.