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Mrs Julie Farrelly
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Dear Mrs Farrelly

Short inspection of St Peter's Catholic 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.**

You, your leadership team and the governing body are committed to providing an inclusive school where every pupil can flourish. Alongside mainstream pupils, you welcome pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) into the school with open arms. You are very proud of how your school supports pupils with SEND and so are the parents and carers who entrust their children to you. In recognition of your work, you have achieved a national award for inclusion. This is because you provide a highly nurturing learning environment which allows these pupils to feel safe and secure in school.

Your teachers and support staff are also passionate about working with pupils with SEND and the increasing proportion of pupils who are also disadvantaged. They know that these pupils require wrap-around care. However, while you are extremely effective in providing strong pastoral support for all your pupils, you and your teachers do not consistently challenge pupils with SEND and/or disadvantaged pupils to make consistently good academic progress in some subjects. This means that some pupils underachieve in relation to their starting points, particularly in reading and writing. In some lessons, particularly in key stage 2, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils with SEND and/or disadvantaged pupils can and should achieve.

However, since the previous inspection, you have taken effective action to improve the progress that pupils make in mathematics. You have done this by ensuring that schemes of work are tailored to meet pupils' needs. In addition, you have provided a range of appropriate ongoing training for staff to improve the quality of teaching of mathematics. The progress that pupils make, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, is now much stronger in mathematics. You have ensured that learning is well sequenced and that pupils are routinely challenged to apply their mathematical knowledge to more complex problems by thinking like a mathematician. For example, pupils now use mathematical vocabulary with increasing precision.

Since the previous inspection, you have also improved provision in the early years and key stage 1. An increasing proportion of children in the early years are on track to achieve a good level of development and pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 1 is broadly average across subjects. Nevertheless, there is much more to do to maintain the momentum in progress from key stage 1 to key stage 2, particularly in writing. Too many pupils make errors with basic punctuation. Teachers do not carefully sequence lessons on grammar to build up pupils' knowledge so that they can be ready for secondary school by the end of key stage 2. Added to this, pupils do not use the knowledge that they acquire from subjects across the wider curriculum to add content and depth to the quality of their writing in English.

Another key milestone that you have achieved since the previous inspection is improving pupils' rates of attendance and punctuality. Your strong leadership in this area means that it is no longer acceptable for pupils to miss school without good reason. You take appropriate action if parents take pupils out of school, for example on unauthorised holidays. You take every opportunity to work with parents so that they know that pupils must be in school to learn.

During the inspection, you recognised the next steps required to improve the school because of the rigour of your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. That said, current school improvement planning lacks precision and focus. It does not contain enough measures of success for different groups of pupils, for example pupils with SEND and/or disadvantaged pupils. Neither does it focus on the most important key priorities that will make the biggest difference to school improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school, including in the early years. All staff have had defibrillator training and they are either trained in first aid or paediatric first aid. Leaders ensure that safeguarding and child-protection training take place regularly and that sessions respond to local needs. For example, there is regular training on supporting pupils and parents to stay safe when online. There is also help and support to address issues such as domestic abuse, violence and child sexual exploitation.

Leaders and governors make regular use of an expert consultant to undertake

audits of their work to keep pupils safe. They use the findings of these audits effectively to improve provision further. There are regular and systematic checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. Record-keeping and work with multi-agencies are extremely strong. The school's procedures are held in high regard in the local area. Other leaders use St Peter's Catholic Primary School's safeguarding policies and procedures as examples of good practice.

The pupils with whom the inspector spoke said that they feel safe in school. They said that there is always someone to talk with if they have any concerns. They also said that bullying, when it does occur, is dealt with effectively by staff. Parents were equally positive about the work that staff do to keep their children safe. Across this school pastoral support is excellent.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I was interested to know about pupils' progress and achievement in writing by the end of key stage 2. This is because, since 2016, their progress in writing has declined significantly over time. In 2018, their progress in this subject was in the bottom 10% nationally. Added to this, too few pupils reached the expected standard in 2018.
- Some pupils included in the national tests in 2018 had specific barriers to learning that had a negative effect on their progress scores. However, other pupils in this cohort also underachieved in relation to their starting points. Work scrutiny highlights that current pupils in key stage 2 continue to underachieve in relation to their starting points in writing. They make too many errors with basic punctuation and teachers do not sequence learning effectively to build up their knowledge of grammar. Pupils do not use the knowledge that they learn in other subjects across the curriculum frequently enough to add interest and substance to their writing in English lessons.
- Second, I wanted to discuss how leaders are improving the progress that disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with SEND make across the school, particularly in reading and writing. This is because these pupils make consistently good progress in mathematics from their starting points. However, they do not make the same good rates of progress in reading and writing.
- Leaders' actions have improved the quality of teaching of early reading and writing for disadvantaged children in the Nursery and Reception classes. By the end of Year 1 in 2018, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check improved considerably because of better-quality teaching. Most notably, in the end of key stage 1 national assessments in 2018, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with SEND who attained expected standards in writing and mathematics improved in relation to previous years. Attainment in reading is also improving quickly because of a strong focus on phonics teaching and pupils' ability to decode words and infer meaning.
- Nevertheless, too few disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with SEND are well prepared to be successful by the end of key stage 2. Teachers' expectations of what these pupils can and should achieve across key stage 2 are not consistently

high. Some pupils remain adversely affected by a legacy of poor-quality teaching. Although leaders have taken effective action to address these concerns, pupils in upper key stage 2 still have some gaps in their knowledge.

- Third, I focused on pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. This was due to the higher-than-average number of pupils who had received a temporary exclusion from school since the previous inspection. There were specific reasons why the headteacher temporarily excluded pupils from school in 2016 and 2017. These reasons were valid. Leaders have since introduced a new behaviour policy to support pupils in their learning. Inspection evidence shows that pupils behave well. In lessons, most pupils focus well on their learning and pupils' conduct around the school is orderly. Pupils are both tolerant and respectful of each other.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing by the end of key stage 2 by ensuring that:
 - basic punctuation is taught effectively
 - lessons are well sequenced so that pupils develop their knowledge of grammar
 - pupils use the knowledge that they learn in other subjects to improve the quality of their writing in English lessons
- improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with SEND in reading and writing by:
 - increasing teachers' expectations of what these pupils can and should achieve
 - building on the improvements to reading, writing and mathematics in the early years and in key stage 1 so that these pupils flourish by the end of key stage 2
- refine school development planning so that it contains the key actions that will make the biggest difference to school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Smart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and the subject leader for mathematics. I also met with teachers from across the school. I met parents and six members of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with the school improvement adviser. In addition, I spoke formally with a group of pupils and informally with others around the school and in lessons. I observed teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2. I undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work across key stages 1 and 2. Also, I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance and pupils' assessment. I also scrutinised a range of policies, your evaluation of how well the school is performing and your school improvement plans. As part of the inspection I considered seven responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and several free-text comments. I also took into account eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 48 responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire.