

22 July 2019

Mr Mark Humphreys
Headteacher
St Francis Catholic Primary School
Nursery Road
Handsworth
Birmingham
West Midlands
B19 1PH

Dear Mr Humphreys

Short inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 May 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, your leadership team and governors have continued to improve the quality of education in the school. You have maintained the caring Christian ethos and strong family feel that is evident across the school.

Parents and carers and staff and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its leaders. All the parents I spoke to were full of praise for the work of the school and said they would definitely recommend it to another parent. They commented that leaders are very approachable and offer tremendous support to their children and themselves. They also said that academic standards are high and the school is highly inclusive. School staff responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire said they are proud to work at the school.

All pupils spoken to were very positive about the school. They are friendly and polite and say they enjoy coming to school where they feel safe and happy. Pupils work well together in lessons and have very positive attitudes to learning. You have high aspirations for your pupils. Standards by the end of key stage 2 are at least in line with national figures. In mathematics, standards are well above national figures at both the expected level and for pupils working at the higher standard. Pupils who are disadvantaged or who speak English as an additional language do as well as their peers in school and, often, at least as well as other pupils nationally.

Analysis of school data and work in pupils' books show that pupils make strong

progress in all subject areas. However, pupils are not always given every opportunity to demonstrate when writing how much they are capable of. Sometimes, writing activities limit how they express their knowledge and understanding.

Governors know the school extremely well and share your high aspirations. They offer effective support and challenge to all leaders. They are frequent visitors to the school to find out about it for themselves from staff, pupils and parents. Governors are very proud to be part of the school.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics and writing so that the most able pupils made consistently good or better progress. You have provided training for all staff to ensure that they can effectively teach all aspects of mathematics and be confident to challenge and support pupils. Outcomes in mathematics are very positive, with progress for the last two years being significantly above the national average figure for pupils overall.

You have developed the use of the 'Power of Reading' as an approach to support reading and writing. This has increased teachers' subject knowledge and pupils' love of reading. You are now using this approach to design your thematic curriculum.

Your intent is to develop the curriculum further so that it will secure deep learning and knowledge acquisition. You want pupils to know and remember more, building on past learning, as they move through the school.

You were also asked to improve children's learning in early years by paying more attention to correct letter formation. You and your early years leader have ensured that letter formation is explicitly taught and practised. Children in early years are happy, confident learners. By the end of the year, children enjoy writing short, simple sentences that are punctuated and show a well-developed handwriting style.

Inspectors also recommended that leaders focus monitoring on checking that teachers provide pupils with opportunities to develop their writing and mathematical problem-solving skills. You have strengthened your leadership team in order to fulfil this recommendation. Phase leaders now carry out a variety of school self-evaluation activities, including monitoring of writing and mathematics. They report back to senior leaders and governors, precisely identifying strengths and areas in need of further development. Your school self-evaluation is robust and accurate.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your mission statement, 'We welcome and value all as individuals created by God,' displayed across the school, reflects your approach to keeping pupils safe. All members of staff know the pupils and families extremely well. They are quick to identify any changes in behaviour or

circumstances, and they resolutely and compassionately follow up on any concerns. You have put in place staff to mentor and support pupils and their families. You and your leaders work effectively with external agencies. As a result, pupils and parents feel safe and are happy to talk to you about any worries or issues they may have.

All staff and governors receive comprehensive training and regular updates, including training in the 'Prevent' duty. Staff are vigilant and know how to report concerns. Pupils said that they felt safe in school and had regular lessons on how to keep safe, including online safety. The school is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School and has achieved the silver award. Pupils are proud to be Rights Respecting ambassadors. You have also introduced attendance champions, peer mediators and play leaders, alongside other responsibilities for pupils. Pupils value these roles and understand how they help to keep the school a happy and safe place to learn and play together. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and that staff deal quickly with any issues.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at how effective your curriculum is in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain and if standards across all subjects are high. You have developed a broad and balanced curriculum. This curriculum, based on your Catholic, Christian ethos and the UNICEF Rights Respecting principles, gives pupils a strong understanding of the world they live in. You and your staff have introduced 'wow' weeks at the start of every topic, and the theme weeks (including anti-bullying week, Black History Week and multi-faith weeks) provide stimulating experiences. You and your staff are now embracing a more thematic approach, working with your Catholic cluster of schools to develop ideas and provide training for staff.
- We also looked at the teaching of writing across the school, to identify whether pupils are achieving as well as they can. I also wanted to investigate the opportunities pupils have to write using good-quality texts. You and your staff's development of literacy has supported the improvement of writing across the school. The writing in pupils' books is of a high quality. Pupils write in a variety of styles across all subject areas. Presentation is good and your focus on vocabulary development supports strong outcomes. Your plans provide further opportunities for pupils to write widely and with more independence and autonomy.
- We also looked at the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1. I wanted to know if these prepare pupils for learning in key stage 2 and develop the skills they need to succeed. We visited all Year 1 and Year 2 classes and looked at pupils' books. Outcomes for key stage 1 pupils are improving. Teachers' assessments for 2019 show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard is now slightly above national average figures in reading and writing and in line with national averages in mathematics. At the higher standard, outcomes have improved by 10% in writing, to slightly above the national average. Pupils are well prepared for life in key stage 2.
- You offer pupils a variety of opportunities in and out of school to develop knowledge and skills. Pupils enjoy art, music and the chance to learn about a

variety of religions. They know it is important to support others by engaging in charity work. You and your staff offer holiday clubs for families and have just secured a Department for Education grant to support these clubs. The school is also a 'Citizens' UK, Birmingham' school and you have been recognised as a 'Refugee Welcome School' and are working towards accreditation as a 'School of Sanctuary'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue:

- the work to develop a thematic curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge within each year and year on year
- to develop writing across the school, providing open-ended activities that ensure pupils write with increasing independence and autonomy and make as much progress as they are capable of.

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

Yours sincerely

Tina Willmott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and other leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness, school improvement planning and self-evaluation. I also met with the chair of the governing body and three governors. I spoke with pupils at breaktime and with a group of pupils from Years 2–6 in the afternoon. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of Birmingham local authority.

We visited every class together, observed pupils' learning, looked at their books and talked to pupils about their work. We spent time looking at pupils' books. I scrutinised pupils' progress portfolios and class enrichment and art books.

I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, but I did read the six free-text comments. I considered 30 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 74 pupil responses. We discussed pupils' progress information, attendance data and monitoring information. I scrutinised staff recruitment arrangements and the schools' safeguarding procedures and documentation. I also studied the minutes of

governing body meetings.