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6 September 2019

Mrs Sarah Coggins
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Dear Mrs Coggins

Short inspection of Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your very strong leadership over the last two years has brought stability to the school after a period of considerable turbulence. Together with your head of school, you have established a hardworking, caring and respectful ethos, which reflects the school's Catholic values.

Since the last inspection, the on-site nursery has become part of the school. The action taken by you to improve the nursery provision has raised standards in early years. More widely, you have established very effective approaches to teaching, learning and managing pupils' behaviour across the school. Your staff believe that the school now provides a better education than at the time of the last inspection. They work very hard to support you. They share your ambition for pupils and the considerate approach you take when dealing with them.

The school is now part of The Blessed Edward Campion Federation. Growing cooperation between the two primary schools in the federation gives staff very good opportunities to work and learn together. For example, pupils and staff benefit greatly from joint curriculum planning and share expertise in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

In recent years, more pupils who are in the early stages of learning English have joined the school. In addition, an above-average proportion of pupils join the school at times other than at the start of the school year. Some of these pupils have complex social, emotional or health needs. Your staff provide good support for these pupils.

After the last inspection, leaders and governors were asked to extend the breadth of pupils' reading, provide harder work for the most able pupils and check more carefully on the impact of the actions taken to improve teaching and learning. Before you arrived, action to address the recommendations from the last inspection had been limited. However, you are now tackling these areas and making good progress.

Careful curriculum planning and regular monitoring ensure that the most able pupils are usually set challenging work. In a very few instances, the most able pupils find the work too easy. Leaders and governors keep a careful eye on the impact of teaching and the progress being made by pupils. Your systems for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching, and the extent of pupils' achievements, are effective. The teaching of reading is more effective than it was although you recognise there is still more to do.

The governing body has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the school. It meets regularly and discharges its statutory function well. You provide governors with detailed information about the performance of the school. This allows them to hold you and other leaders to account.

Parent and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Nearly all of those who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, believe that their children are happy and doing very well at school. They would recommend the school to others.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have strengthened safeguarding arrangements in the school. This aspect of the school's work is very well led. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Regular training, which spans key national and local issues, helps to keep staff vigilant and aware of any risks that pupils may face.

Pupils say they feel safe and that unkind behaviour is dealt with firmly. They know who to speak to if they encounter difficulties. Your teachers and other staff help pupils learn about risks to their well-being. Staff know the pupils very well, including those who are most vulnerable. Risks to pupils when in and out of school are assessed very well.

Your staff communicate regularly with each other about any safeguarding concerns. Any action taken to support individuals is reviewed regularly. Careful monitoring of each pupil's welfare, accompanied by swift action when needed, helps to keep

pupils safe. Liaison with other agencies is effective. Vulnerable families are supported well if pupils have any attendance or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus inspection activity on pupils' progress and outcomes in reading and writing. Earlier weaknesses in teaching, and variations across pupil cohorts, affected outcomes in previous years. For example, reading test results for Year 6 pupils were below average in 2017 and 2018.
- The action taken to standardise the approach to teaching reading and writing has led to much better outcomes. In 2019, unvalidated test results show that pupils did very well. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading in the key stage 2 test rose to well above the national figure. Similarly, a higher-than-average proportion of Year 6 pupils achieved the expected standard in writing. In mathematics, pupils have achieved very well in their key stage 2 tests over the last three years.
- Most children who start in Nursery or Reception have levels of development below or well below those expected for their age. In many instances, these children have speech, language and communication difficulties. Strong teaching and very good care help these children make good progress. By the time they leave Reception, nearly three quarters of children achieve a good level of development.
- In key stage 1, pupils are taught phonics well by skilled staff. Pupils practise reading familiar words until they are fluent. By the end of Year 2, in 2019, all pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check. In reading, writing and mathematics, unvalidated key stage 1 test results show that the proportion of pupils achieving or exceeding the expected standard was broadly in line with the national average.
- Staff quickly identify pupils who need additional help. Vulnerable pupils and those with SEND are supported very well in school. However, a small group of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils still struggle with reading. These pupils rarely read at home and do not develop a love of reading.
- More generally, pupils learn to discover different authors and read across a wide range of genres. However, too few have access to ambitious enough texts. Moreover, some of the books used by teachers when teaching the whole class lack quality. Work to improve early reading, by matching reading books more precisely to the phonics scheme, is at the early stages.
- We also agreed to investigate the behaviour of pupils as fixed-term exclusion rates in 2017/18 were higher than those for similar schools. A very small number of pupils account for these figures. These pupils are supported well by school staff and other agencies.
- During the inspection, pupils were smartly dressed, had positive attitudes and were unfailingly polite. Their behaviour around the school and at playtime was very good. They work and cooperate well with each other. For example, they take turns, act responsibly and treat equipment with respect. A small number of pupils need additional help in regulating their behaviour when they first arrive at

school.

- You and your staff have worked very hard to build a positive, friendly and ambitious climate for learning in the school. All staff praise pupils when they do well, including by ensuring that assemblies celebrate success. On such occasions, pupils delight in the achievement of others. This encourages all pupils to aspire to excellence.
- Pupils are taught the national curriculum and take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and trips. Such opportunities ensure that pupils have very good opportunities to develop personally as well as academically. A strong sense of community pervades the school, which was reflected in very impressive and confident joint singing at the end of an assembly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils who struggle with reading are helped to read more at home, including by working with their families
- teachers always select reading books for pupils that allow them to practise what they are being taught in phonics
- suitably challenging texts are available for the most able pupils
- high-quality texts are used more routinely in whole-class activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Cladingbowl
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed pupils in lessons and around the school. I spoke with them about their work and their experience of school. I also met with school leaders, staff, governors and representatives for the diocese and the local authority. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information about safeguarding, behaviour and progress. I took account of 38 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 26 written responses. I also considered the school's own recent survey of parents and 17 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.