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Mrs T Davis
Headteacher
St Anthony's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Davis

Short inspection of St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017, 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 your school was judged to be good in July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Leaders and governors have successfully managed a period of change in staffing at different levels. You and your leaders now form an effective team. You have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Since your appointment in September 2015, you have introduced a range of new initiatives that have brought about key improvements in the school. Importantly, you have taken your staff with you. All of the staff who responded to the Ofsted survey stated that they feel motivated and respected.

The school is proud of its Catholic ethos. Its mission statement, 'Christ is at the heart of our community', underpins all that you do. Walls are adorned with impressive works of art created by a resident artist working alongside pupils. Staff and pupils are happy. During the inspection, staff and pupils were keen to share their learning, welcoming me to their classrooms and asking questions about my work.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics and the effectiveness of leadership. You have focused carefully on the teaching of mathematics and have provided staff with a range of training and development programmes. This training has improved how teachers use

assessment information to ensure that pupils are challenged in their learning. You have also appointed a leader with key skills and experience to oversee mathematics. As a result of your focus, pupils' progress has improved over time. Similarly, leadership at all levels has developed since the last inspection. Leaders make good use of assessment information to inform improvement plans. You carefully track the progress that pupils make over five assessment points through the year. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is analysed to establish any new priorities.

In 2015, standards in phonics dipped and were below those found nationally. You quickly responded by providing training to staff and appointed a 'phonics champion' to monitor improvements and provide additional support. Consequently, results improved considerably in 2016 and are now closer to national averages. You have correctly identified a priority to maintain improvements in phonics and build on recent staff training.

Though pupils leave St Anthony's with standards above those found nationally by the end of key stage 2, outcomes have not been consistently strong in the early years foundation stage or key stage 1 in the past. A programme of support from the local authority has successfully reversed historical weaknesses in the early years. Improvements in the quality of teaching have resulted in better standards in key stage 1. However, outcomes in key stage 1 are not yet in line with national levels and there is scope to improve provision further.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that safeguarding policies and procedures are of a high quality and serve to keep children safe. The school pays particular attention to providing pupils with a programme of support through the curriculum. For example, in discussions with pupils it was clear that they had a very good understanding of how to stay safe online and who they could talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils have also received support and advice from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). Pupils are clear about how important it is to 'speak out, stay safe'. Personal development, behaviour and welfare are a key strength of the school. Pupils' welfare, including their regular attendance at school, is carefully monitored and any concerns are promptly addressed.

Inspection findings

- The team of staff within the early years foundation stage are well led and use assessment information in a highly effective way. Observations of learning are placed onto spreadsheets so that staff can track the impact of teaching in the areas of learning. Staff know children very well. They use information from observations and their ongoing knowledge of children to inform planning. Children's writing books evidence strong rates of progress from their different starting points. The proportion of children who have attained a good level of development has risen over the last three years and is now above national levels. Improvements in assessment must now be embedded further.

- Improvements in assessment and planning are also contributing to stronger rates of progress in key stage 1. The overall quality of teaching has improved in this phase of the school. Pupils' books in key stage 1 show that they are successfully applying their phonic knowledge in a range of different genres in their writing. The positive outcomes of staff training are evident in classrooms. Leaders have challenged and supported teachers to develop their questioning skills and the accuracy of assessments. Teachers' questioning encourages pupils to think carefully about what they already know and what they want to find out. For example, I observed pupils discussing everything they know about vehicles before embarking on an exciting new topic in design technology. However, the recent improvements in key stage 1 are not yet fully embedded and leaders are aware that the training opportunities that have been established will need to be built upon further.
- Leaders understand the needs of disadvantaged pupils and plan programmes of support that result in improved outcomes. Governors have oversight of how additional funding is used and meet with leaders to discuss impact and make any necessary changes to plans. Every disadvantaged pupil is carefully tracked. If anyone falls behind, they are offered additional support which is matched to their needs.
- The school has adopted a systematic and synthetic approach to phonics that is consistent across different classes. The progress that pupils make is regularly tracked to ensure that sounds are learned quickly and securely. In the Reception Year, I observed phonics being taught and watched pupils sounding out sentences, writing them down and reading them back to staff. Pupils are taught by skilled staff and are quickly becoming confident readers who are able to transfer their knowledge of sounds into their writing. The impact of improved phonics teaching is also noticeable in writing in key stage 1. In this phase of the school, pupils are writing with greater fluency and are successfully using a wide range of adventurous vocabulary.
- The school has appointed several pupils as ambassadors for fundamental British values. Ambassadors share their knowledge of British values with their peers in assemblies and during class meetings. In the autumn term, pupils learned about 'the rule of law' and could talk with confidence about the potential impact of not establishing laws. One pupil described their understanding of values such as 'the rule of law' and 'mutual respect' by stating, 'It is important that everyone gets a say on what they think but you have to stick to the rules.'
- The governing body has undertaken an audit of governors' skills and has devised a development plan to ensure the governors are as effective as possible. New governors have been appointed to strengthen the level of support and challenge to leaders. Governors have a clear and accurate view of the journey that the school has been on. They are able to talk with confidence about aspects of the school that are strengths and those that require further development. Governors' questioning about the school's effectiveness has also improved, particularly in relation to matters such as bullying and safeguarding.
- New leaders have been appointed to oversee the development of key areas within the curriculum. These leaders are clear about their responsibilities and

have developed logs and reports to evaluate the impact their actions. While effective, some of their work is not yet fully established or as evaluative as the work of senior leaders.

- The local authority has provided highly effective support to the school. In particular, a programme of training in the early years has resulted in rapid improvements for children at the start of their learning journey at St Anthony's. Improvement board meetings and reviews have also served to support the school's ongoing self-evaluation and identification of areas for development.
- Parents that I spoke to and those who responded to the school's questionnaire identify that they are very happy with the school. One parent described the school as 'fantastic' and was very grateful to staff for the support provided to her children over many years at St Anthony's.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- effective assessment practice is embedded further across the school by providing teachers with ongoing opportunities to share the judgements that they make about pupils' progress
- improvements in phonics are built upon further through the continuous tracking of early reading skills and the provision of any necessary additional support
- the skills of subject leaders are developed further so that they can hone their capacity for evaluation and respond quickly to any areas that are identified as priorities.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with senior leaders to review the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. As a result of discussions about the school's effectiveness, the following key lines of enquiry were agreed: how effectively leaders use assessment information to evaluate and improve outcomes in the early years and key stage 1; how effectively additional funding is used to raise standards; the quality of the teaching and

assessment of phonics; and the extent to which leaders have created a culture of safeguarding, including the monitoring of attendance.

I visited the Reception Year with the headteacher and observed pupils learning phonics. This included hearing pupils sounding out words, writing down sentences and reading back their work to staff. I met with members of the early years team to discuss how they use assessment to inform the curriculum and their weekly plans. I conducted a learning walk in key stage 1 with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I met with leaders after the learning walk to discuss their findings and evaluate the accuracy of their monitoring. I scrutinised a range of books across the early years and key stage 1 to evaluate the progress that pupils are making from their different starting points.

I met with the school's fundamental British values ambassadors. We discussed their work and the extent to which they are supported to feel safe. I observed play at lunchtime and spoke to pupils about school life.

I met with three representatives from the governing body including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the school's local authority adviser.

I reviewed the following school documents: the self-evaluation form, development plan, governing body minutes, local authority review, the single central record, personnel files, child protection files, training records, assessment information, pupil premium plans and the governing body's development plan.

I met with parents before school and reviewed the internal questionnaire conducted by the school. I reviewed the 50 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, the 21 responses to the staff survey and 59 responses to the pupil survey. There were no responses from parents via Ofsted's free text.