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Mr Kevin Flood
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Flood

Short inspection of St Austin's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 2018, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have upheld a school culture where talent, including in music and the arts, is celebrated within a caring, supportive environment. As one pupil told me, 'Teachers care deeply about us.'

The previous inspection asked you to raise attainment in mathematics and to ensure that work is appropriately demanding for most-able pupils.

Since the last inspection you have successfully raised achievement in mathematics. In 2017, pupils in key stage 2 made average progress and their attainment was broadly average, including for disadvantaged pupils. Similarly, in key stage 1, attainment is broadly average in mathematics. High-quality training and support from the trust and other external bodies have improved teachers' subject knowledge of mathematics. In particular, they have ensured that there are now more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematics skills to solve problems. The work in pupils' books shows that their progress in mathematics is accelerating further.

Most-able pupils in Year 6, who I spoke to on the day, were keen to tell me how they had to 'think really hard' in lessons but that they enjoyed this challenge. Outcomes from 2017 show that most-able pupils in Year 6 made good progress. The work I saw in pupils' books showed that in general, pupils are well stretched.

A number of staff, including leaders, are new to the school. One of your priorities

last year was to improve behaviour. I could see that most teachers set high expectations for behaviour and that behaviour at playtime and lunchtime was good. I found pupils polite and courteous at all times. However, you agreed that routines in class sometimes need sharpening so that all pupils contribute, for example, to the school prayer in the morning.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent summed up the thoughts of many: 'The culture of high expectations alongside excellent academic progress has made me a very happy parent.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of a high quality. You have a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well trained and there are regular safeguarding updates. All staff are well aware of what they must do if they have concerns. Your procedures for vetting and checking new members of staff are robust.

The records I saw showed me that you have a proactive approach to safeguarding. Teachers record any concerns promptly using your electronic system. Your designated safeguarding leaders act on these concerns promptly, involving outside agencies if necessary.

In this inspection, I investigated the high persistent absence, which is caused by pupils taking extended holidays abroad. It was clear to me that you are doing everything possible to ensure that parents fully understand the potential impact this is having on their children's education. As a result, persistent absence has reduced but remains above average.

The pupils I spoke to understood how to use the internet safely and told me that bullying is rare. This is verified in your detailed records. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) expressed no concerns about bullying or behaviour.

Inspection findings

- I was interested to find out the reasons behind pupils' achievement in reading being below that of mathematics and writing. While pupils apparently were reading well, their skills in comprehension were not so strong. This resulted in some pupils not reaching the national expected standard in the 2017 key stage 2 tests. I could see in pupils' books that pupils' comprehension skills are now being developed well. Moreover, you have widened the range of reading material that pupils use, which includes non-fiction texts. This is improving pupils' vocabulary well. The development of the two libraries means that there are now better opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics dipped below the national average in 2017. In our joint visits to lessons, we could see

how there are good opportunities for pupils to apply their phonic skills to writing. You agreed that pace in phonics lessons was sometimes slow for the most able pupils, who sometimes had to wait for others to catch up. Pupils who struggle receive good support from teaching assistants and this is ensuring that more pupils are on track to reach the expected standard this year. Pupils read well in class and use their knowledge of phonics to read unfamiliar words.

- I was curious to find out why, in the early years, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics were below those found nationally. Children arrive from various nursery settings with differing experiences and skills. Many children are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. From their low starting points, therefore, children make good progress during their time in Reception. Assessments are robust and indicate very clear next steps in learning for children. The leader for early years has improved how mathematics is taught both indoors and outdoors. This is leading to more children than before being on track to meet and exceed the early learning goals.
- Lastly, I wanted to ensure that pupils were improving their skills and knowledge of subjects other than English and mathematics. A third of your pupils learn a musical instrument and take part in the choir. Pupils were keen to tell me how much they enjoyed activities such as den-building and bread-making. I could see in pupils' topic books that they were developing their skills in history and geography well. However, you agreed that this is still inconsistent between classes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is sufficient pace and challenge in phonics lessons for the most able pupils to achieve well
- the opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in history and geography are consistently strong in all classes
- routines in lessons are sharpened so that all pupils make a positive contribution.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy council and the chair of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds (RC), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Jones
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and three key phase leaders, two members, including the chair of the governing body, a representative from the academy trust and a local authority representative. I spoke to six pupils from Year 6 over lunchtime and listened to two pupils reading. While in classrooms I observed teaching, spoke to pupils and looked through the work in their books.

I considered a range of documentation, including the 40 responses to Parent View, the school development plan, the summary of self-evaluation, school improvement partner reports, the tracking of pupils' progress, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding documents.