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John McDonald
Headteacher
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Dear John McDonald

Short inspection of The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The new leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school provides a calm and purposeful atmosphere which helps to support pupils' learning. There is a very clear, shared ethos between staff and pupils that drives the school forward. Pupils know the school's mission statement and not only abide by it, but love singing it too. Pupils have a voice in their school, with ideas from the school council being put into action. The school is very well organised so that it runs smoothly. Pupils and staff are proud of the things the school offers.

Governors and leaders arranged to have new perimeter fencing installed to improve the outdoor play areas, as well as a lovely early years playground. They have also expanded the library provision as part of their whole-school focus on reading. As a result, pupils' interest in reading has shown a marked improvement.

You have an honest view of the school's strengths and know what still needs to be worked on. The school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan are detailed and accurately pinpoint the most important things to do next.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to provide more challenge for the most able pupils. In response, you have identified those pupils and ensured that work is now challenging enough for them to make more rapid progress. This is

starting to have a positive impact on their attainment, apart from early years, where there are some missed opportunities to challenge the most able children.

Since the last inspection, you and your leaders have introduced a whole school topic-based curriculum, which is linked to the pupils' interests. This has led to the purchase of new books for your expanding library so that pupils can research the topics they are covering more effectively. As a result, pupils are becoming better able to learn independently.

Attendance is improving because of the many strategies and rewards that are in place to encourage pupils to come to school.

The parental survey recently completed by the school confirmed that parents were very supportive of its work. This was also clear from the majority of parents who responded to Parent View and those I talked to in the playground. The pupils I met with were very positive about the school and this was typically reflected in the responses to their questionnaire.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff, pupils and parents feel that this school is a safe place to be. For example, the pupils I spoke to talked about the lessons they had had about how to stay safe when using computers and mobile telephones. Records show that all staff receive safeguarding training regularly. Governors are also actively involved in making sure that their own safeguarding training is current, as well as keeping regular checks on the school safeguarding systems.

Close links with external agencies provide additional support for those children who need it. Policies are current and case studies show that everyone understands the processes to follow if they have any concerns. Parents are able to access safeguarding information easily from the school website.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and teachers are dedicated to providing the best they can for pupils. The close partnership between you and the assistant headteacher is a particularly effective aspect of senior leadership. It supports the school's well-understood high expectations of teaching and pupils' achievement. This helps everyone to be fully involved and for the work of the school to be sharply held to account.
- You have created strong links between the performance management of staff and their training needs. Teachers are enjoying the professional development opportunities that they now have. As a result, teachers feel valued.
- You have put in place an exciting new topic-based curriculum. Pupils have latched onto the topics such as 'planets' with real enthusiasm. The artwork and writing relating to planets is impressive.
- You have made sure that the indoor and outdoor areas in early years provide a safe haven for younger children to develop a wide range of skills. A lovely

example of this was the construction of a bat cave by a group of children dressed in superhero outfits. The children's use of imaginative play and use of language were pleasure to observe.

- The school receives additional funding to support a significant number of vulnerable pupils. These pupils, as well as others who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are looked after very well. Test results in 2016 showed that these pupils in Year 6 made progress at similar rates to others in writing and mathematics. The nurture room is used to best effect in supporting pupils to acquire strategies to help them learn.
- Leaders check carefully that teachers' and teaching assistants' work is good enough. You have a systematic programme of observation of classroom practice which, for example, has led to improvement in the way that teachers assess pupils. Leaders make sure that teachers match their assessment standards to those in other schools. However, subject leads still have to develop their skills in assessing the progress being made by pupils in their topic workbooks.
- Governors take their work very seriously and actively look for ways to have more impact on improving the school. Governors' skills and experience closely match the school's needs.
- Over time, pupils' outcomes have varied. For example, in 2015, the progress made by Year 6 groups in mathematics, reading and writing dipped. Last year there was a strong upturn in mathematics and writing, showing progress better than that seen across the country. Accurate use of current data shows that this progress is being sustained.
- You have made the learning of phonics a priority. This is resulting in improved outcomes for boys and girls from early years to Year 2. This in turn, is starting to have a positive impact on reading outcomes for these pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve progress in reading, by further developing assessment and teaching strategies that are already in place
- develop the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders in assessing progress across the wider curriculum
- continue to ensure that the more able children in early years are provided with learning opportunities to make rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Maggie Parker
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, nurture room staff and subject leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness. I discussed the school's single central record of safeguarding checks with you and the chair of governors. I also met with additional governors and the local authority school improvement partner. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school and during lessons.

I toured the school accompanied by you, and observed teaching and learning in classes with you across the school. I heard eight pupils read. I also talked to parents at the start of the school day.

I examined documents, including the school's information about safeguarding pupils, the school's self-evaluation document and the improvement plan. I examined attendance data and progress data alongside staff training information. I reviewed 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also reviewed the responses to a much larger survey of parents recently completed in the school. I considered eight responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils and nine responses to the survey for staff.