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17 October 2018

Mrs N Kirkman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Kirkman

Short inspection of St Theresa's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 September 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know your school well. This is because you work effectively with governors and other leaders to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Governors are regular visitors to school and work together with senior and subject leaders to ensure that improvements are made across the curriculum.

You have the enthusiastic support of the school staff. All those who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire agree that the school is led and managed well and that leaders do all that they can to ensure that they have an effective teaching staff. Parents and carers are equally positive about the school. One parent, reflecting the views of others, said, 'St Theresa's has a wonderful ethos with a caring teaching staff. Positive encouragement is always given.'

Pupils behave well in school. They are caring towards others and told me that they are particularly proud of the way that British values are reflected throughout their school. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to represent their school in a variety of roles and take seriously their responsibilities as buddies, supporting the younger pupils.

You are proud of your Christian ethos, which strengthens the relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Displays around school celebrate your Christian values and reflect the importance that you attach to the promotion of virtues such as love, respect and kindness.

At the last inspection, senior leaders were asked to develop subject leadership in school. This has been done successfully. Senior leaders provide effective support for subject leaders that enables them to develop their subjects and monitor pupils' progress in their areas. Subject leaders work effectively with governors and teachers to further develop pupils' subject knowledge through their participation in a range of exciting and engaging activities. For example, special days dedicated to fitness, living history, and art and design have been effective in developing pupils' learning. Your staff have also carefully utilised the expertise of a range of external visitors to enhance the development of pupils' subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills. Owing to your work in this area, these leaders have a more informed picture of attainment and progress in their subjects and are developing the wider curriculum in an effective manner.

You have worked effectively with leaders to develop a broad, balanced and exciting curriculum. The school has been awarded certificates that acknowledge the quality of the curriculum and teaching in science and physical education. You also attach great significance to pupils' wider understanding of the world. For example, pupils in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 start the day by watching and discussing recent news. Your staff also enthusiastically promote the importance of reading. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and frequently. Because of the breadth and richness of the curriculum, pupils achieve well in a wide range of areas. For example, the most recent published data for key stage 2 shows that a higher proportion of pupils attained the expected standard in reading, mathematics, science and English grammar, punctuation and spelling than was seen nationally.

At the last inspection, inspectors also asked leaders to improve outcomes in writing throughout the school. Although outcomes in writing have improved, this remains an area for further development because pupils do not achieve as well in writing as they do in other areas.

During the inspection, we discussed the areas of the school's work that require further development. We agreed that, despite improvement, there are still too many children who do not achieve a good level of development during their time in early years. Furthermore, while you have been able to reduce rates of persistent absence, there are still too many pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should. Finally, although a greater proportion of pupils are now attaining the higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2, we agreed on the importance of consolidating and strengthening the improvements that have been made in this area.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school building is secure and signing-in procedures are thorough. Staff are well trained and have a clear understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe.

Leaders have well-established systems to monitor the most vulnerable pupils and provide them with support beyond school. They store pupil information securely and

ensure that necessary referrals to external agencies are made in a timely manner. As a result, pupils receive the support they require both in school and from external agencies.

Pupils feel safe in school and have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. This is because school leaders provide them with a wide range of opportunities to learn about personal safety both in the real world and online. Pupils particularly value the messages delivered by visitors to school, such as representatives from a national safeguarding charity, the police and the fire service. You place a strong emphasis on pupil well-being and ensure that staff receive training in a range of areas linked to mental health to enable them to support pupils effectively in this area. For example, you have trained staff to deliver yoga sessions, which is having a positive impact on pupils' well-being.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we explored several lines of enquiry. The first considered the performance of the youngest children in school. Children start at the school with widely differing abilities to one another. From their various starting points, children make good progress. Leaders and teachers have worked with the local authority to improve the way that the school supports children in early years. As a result, the learning environment now provides children with access to a wide range of well-resourced learning opportunities. During the inspection, for example, children were searching for worms in the ground to place into a wormery. An adult supporting them was able to successfully develop their understanding of minibeasts by asking focused questions linked to books provided to support children's learning. Despite these improvements, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception Year has been below national averages for the last three years.
- A second line of enquiry focused on pupils' attendance because rates of absence were above national averages in 2015/16 and 2016/17. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils who were classed as persistently absent in 2016/17 was well above the national average. You explained how staff work closely with pupils and their families to increase attendance in school. Leaders identify that a significant number of families are taking unauthorised holidays. Leaders inform parents of the importance of ensuring that their children attend school regularly. They send letters to families to inform them when their children's attendance falls below an expected level. Leaders invite parents to attend review meetings when there is no improvement. Teachers reward pupils for good attendance by providing them with certificates. Pupils also value the 'Big Breakfast' treat, which rewards good attendance. As a result, attendance for specific pupils has improved and persistent absence has declined. However, attendance for some pupils remains below your expectations and historic national averages for all pupils.
- We also examined the effectiveness of your efforts to improve outcomes in writing at the end of each key stage. You provide staff with training to develop their teaching in this subject area. Consequently, there is now a consistent approach to the teaching of writing throughout school. The work in pupils' books

shows evidence of good progress. Teachers display examples of pupils' high-quality writing in classrooms and around school to celebrate pupils' achievements in this area. As a result of this focus, published performance information over time shows an increase in pupils' attainment in writing at both key stages 1 and 2. Additionally, the school's most recent unvalidated performance information at the end of key stage 2 shows an increase in progress for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. However, pupils' attainment in writing is less strong than their performance in reading and mathematics, which compares favourably to historic national averages at key stage 2.

- My final line of enquiry considered what leaders are doing to ensure that pupils receive appropriate levels of challenge throughout the school. Leaders have provided staff with training to ensure that they are aware of what the higher standards look like in the national curriculum. Leaders have developed a 'ladder of expectations' to ensure that teachers are able to raise pupils' attainment further. The school's provisional results for 2018 at key stage 2 shows a strong increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards in reading and mathematics. However, while the proportion of the most able pupils achieving well is improving, it is still not consistently in line with national averages with regard to the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Furthermore, my observations of teaching and my evaluation of pupils' work over time indicate that the level of challenge that teachers provide for the most able pupils remains inconsistent.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an even greater proportion of children in early years achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year
- pupils' outcomes in writing improve further, so that they match those being achieved in mathematics and reading
- recent improvements are built upon, so a greater proportion of the most able pupils attain the higher standards by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2
- attendance continues to improve for those who are reluctant to attend on a regular basis.

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 Cheshire West and Chester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with pupils about their work, their school life and their understanding of safety. I held meetings with you and your deputy and assistant headteachers to discuss your school's evaluation of its performance and its safeguarding procedures. I met with three governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and safeguarding. I also spoke with staff to discuss their subject leadership, the curriculum and their understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe. Finally, I met with the associate school improvement adviser from the local authority.

I looked at learning in books and reviewed documentation, which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and the school development plan. I considered eight responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 12 responses from the pupil questionnaire and eight responses from the staff questionnaire. I also analysed leaders' summaries of historical questionnaires and took account of an email sent to me during the inspection.

I visited most classes, together with you, to observe pupils' learning. I reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.