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Mrs Claire Faulkner  
Headteacher  
SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Faulkner

### **Short inspection of SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 January 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 are a reflective leader who is continually seeking ways in which to secure the best educational outcomes for pupils. You and the deputy headteacher use your detailed understanding of pupils' individual learning and welfare needs to identify accurately where further improvements are required. Senior leaders, staff and governors work together as a strong team and with determination to help pupils 'reach their full potential'.

There have been a number of changes since the previous inspection in January 2014. You were appointed as the headteacher in September 2014. In 2016, the early years provision was extended to accommodate two-year-olds. At the same time, governors appointed a nursery manager.

'I am proud of my school because we have fun while we learn', and 'we are like a family of friends', were just some of the comments made by pupils about their school. Senior leaders and staff have created a culture where everyone is made to feel welcome. Pupils of all ages are polite and considerate towards each other, adults and visitors. Two-year-old children and children in the Nursery and Reception classes are successfully encouraged to explore their surroundings, be creative and develop their independence. Older pupils in the school thoroughly relish taking on a range of roles and responsibilities. For instance, Year 6 pupils enjoy helping the children in the early years to settle into the school. They also make sure that the youngest children have someone to play with during breaktimes. The pupil lead learners regularly visit lessons and review displays in classroom and around the school. They consider what is working well and

what could be even better and then share their ideas for improvement with senior leaders and governors.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to make sure that teachers plan work that is neither too easy nor too hard for pupils. An effective partnership with four local Catholic schools has given staff the chance to observe and share effective practice. Teachers now set more suitably challenging work for pupils of different abilities, especially in mathematics. Achievement in mathematics is improving quickly because of the focus teachers place on reasoning and using the most efficient strategies to solve complex problems. Pupils of all abilities show enthusiasm and resilience when asked to solve problems. In Year 6, for example, pupils worked together admirably to plan a holiday to Egypt. They researched travel, accommodation and excursions costs to find the best price combinations that would enable them to stay within the set budget.

Leaders and teachers were also asked to raise pupils' achievement in writing by improving pupils' accuracy of spelling and punctuation. Work in pupils' books shows that, by the time pupils leave the school, they use punctuation correctly and spell accurately. Your latest achievement information, my visits to lessons and my review of examples of pupils' written work confirm that the most able pupils and those of middle ability make strong gains in writing. However, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are not consistently offered the right level of challenge in some classes. Senior leaders acknowledge that further work is required to help these pupils make faster progress in writing. You have also identified the need to give children in the early years more occasions to practise and extend their writing skills.

Senior leaders and governors pay careful attention to the performance and attendance of different groups of learners. The actions that are being taken to raise the achievement of the small number of disadvantaged pupils are proving beneficial. Nevertheless, leaders and governors realise that, while rates of progress are improving rapidly for these pupils, some differences remain between their attainment and that of pupils nationally. The emphasis staff are now placing on pupils attending school regularly is leading to improvements. However, there are a small number of pupils whose attendance remains low.

The parents and grandparents I spoke with during the inspection and the vast majority of parents who responded to Parent's View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were full of praise about the quality of education and the care their children receive. Typical comments included: 'The improvement in my daughter's work is fabulous. She is excelling in subjects she previously struggled with', and 'I feel we have been lucky to find a school that provides a good education and, just as importantly, a safe and caring environment where children can express their individuality'.

### **Safeguarding is effective**

The leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make sure that staff training is up-to-date and you meet with staff frequently to discuss different safeguarding scenarios and the actions staff should take. As a consequence, staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibility to keep children

safe and take prompt action when they have any concerns about children. Members of the governing body undertake their own checks to make sure that the school's safeguarding systems and procedures work effectively.

Pupils of all ages told me that they feel safe in school and that staff take time to listen to any worries they may have. Pupils told me that they learn how to use the internet safely, cross the road carefully and stay safe near water. Discussions with pupils and school records confirm that occurrences of misconduct and bullying are rare and dealt with appropriately and promptly. The school's nurture group is particularly effective at helping individual pupils to manage calmly and positively any difficulties they may be facing in their lives.

### **Inspection findings**

- The number of pupils in some year groups is small. Moreover, in a few classes mobility is high, with a significant number of pupils joining the school part-way during a key stage or academic year. You and the staff manage these changes well. Together, you make sure that pupils new to the school receive the support they need to settle in quickly and to address any gaps in their education. The positive effect of this support is not always reflected in the published results. This is because some pupils do not have enough time to make the necessary gains in their learning. The combination of the small number of pupils in some cohorts and mobility leads to variable outcomes for pupils at the end of Reception and Years 1 and 2 from one academic year to the next. For these reasons, I took account of the school's achievement information for individual and groups of pupils and pupils' work across different subjects during the inspection.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, overall progress in writing was much lower than in reading and mathematics. While the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing was similar to the national average, none of the pupils in Year 6 achieved greater depth in writing.
- Work in pupils' books confirms that most pupils currently in the school are making rapid progress in writing and reaching higher standards than in the past. There are a number of reasons for this. The writing activities that staff plan motivate and enthuse boys and girls. Pupils in Years 2 and 3, for instance, were keen to show me their letters about life in the trenches during the First World War. The letters were heartfelt and accurately described how difficult life was for the soldiers. Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are also high. These pupils are challenged to select and use appropriate grammar and punctuation and to use sophisticated vocabulary to engage the reader. In contrast, not all teachers ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have the resources they need to complete their written work on their own. As a consequence, there are occasions when these pupils struggle to complete their written work without substantial help from an adult.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception was broadly similar to the national proportion in 2017. Following a more detailed analysis of these results, senior leaders found that children's performance in reading and writing was not as strong as in the other areas of learning.
- Suitable action is being taken to address the weaknesses in reading and writing.

Adults are providing children with effective reading support. Consequently, children show a keen interest in books and use their knowledge of sounds to join in with rhymes and stories. Some pupils read simple words and phrases with confidence. With adult support, children learn to use marks to express their ideas and some progress to writing simple sentences. You have recognised that the children in early years do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable in writing. This is because not all staff provide children with enough opportunities to write, especially when children choose their own activities.

- You and the deputy headteacher use your comprehensive knowledge of each disadvantaged pupil to make sure that the support they receive is precisely targeted to close any gaps in learning. More recently, senior leaders and governors have started to check the impact on disadvantaged pupils of interventions much more frequently. This is enabling you to respond more swiftly when an intervention is not helping pupils to make quicker progress. You acknowledge that staff need to do more to reduce the differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in the school and that of pupils nationally.
- Each week, pupils receive attendance awards. Every half term the parents of children who attend regularly or whose attendance has improved receive a congratulatory text message. Where appropriate you invite parents to meet with you to discuss strategies for improving the attendance of their child. The range of awards and meetings are encouraging most pupils to attend regularly. However, there are a small number of pupils whose attendance, although improving steadily, remains low. Staff and external agencies are continuing to work with these families.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers enable the youngest children in the school and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to make even faster progress in writing by:
  - increasing the opportunities the youngest children have to practise and enhance their writing skills
  - providing pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities with suitable resources so that they are able to complete their written work on their own
- staff continue to embed the school's strategies for meeting the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils so that these pupils reach even higher standards
- staff continue to work with parents to improve the attendance of the small group of pupils who continue to miss school regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a representative from the Archdiocese of Birmingham. I had a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body and I also met with two governors. I spoke with parents and grandparents at the start of the school day. I took account of the 32 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, including the 24 free-text responses received for the inspection. I also considered the 41 responses to the pupil inspection questionnaire and the 18 responses to the staff survey. I visited every classroom with you and looked at samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and the wider curriculum. I spoke with pupils informally throughout the school day. I looked at a range of documentation, including those relating to safeguarding, your school improvement plan, the latest information about pupils' achievement and attendance and behaviour records.