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Mrs Mary Stanley
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Dear Mrs Mary Stanley

Short inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 2017 with Michael Appleby OI, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite significant changes in staffing, including changes to your leadership team, you have continued to secure improvements ensuring that St Augustine's Catholic Primary School remains a vibrant, purposeful place in which to learn, underpinned by its strong, distinctive Catholic ethos.

Your vision and passion for improving the learning experiences of every individual is very evident. You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Consequently, you have clearly focused on the correct priorities and are taking effective action to address areas of weakness. An example of this is the improvements you have made to the provision of reading this year following a dip in the reading results in 2016. These improvements have had a clear impact on the development of pupils' reading skills and, as a result, standards in reading are improving.

The early years leads the way in ensuring that children get off to a strong start. Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are generally below those expected for their age. A great number of children do not speak English when they enter school. The language-rich environment and excellent support from adults ensures that children's speaking and listening skills develop quickly so that they are very well prepared for the challenges of key stage 1. You intend to strengthen this further by ensuring that all adults working in the early years have a good

understanding of the children's individual next steps for learning. Not all adults we spoke to were aware of the children's next steps.

The school is rightly proud of its Catholic ethos. Its mission statement, 'As one family working together to be the best that we can be, we live, love and learn with Jesus', 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 and proud of their school. During the inspection, pupils were enthusiastic to share their learning with the inspectors. The classroom ambassadors welcomed us to their classrooms and confidently explained what they were learning about. Pupils show positive attitudes to their learning, including in the early years. They are extremely polite and well-mannered and their conduct around the school is excellent.

You have effectively addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection. You have ensured that learning is well matched to what pupils can do and that more able pupils are challenged. We saw clear examples of this in pupils' books and during our observations in the classrooms. This greater challenge has resulted in improved progress in writing and mathematics. However, you recognise that more still needs to be done to improve progress in reading. Leaders and managers have used their monitoring and evaluation skills highly effectively to ensure that the staff new to school since the last inspection have been able to maintain the standard of teaching and learning. Staff say they value the training and support they receive.

You work hard to develop good relationships with parents, providing pastoral care and support where necessary. The majority of parents spoken to by the inspectors and who responded to the inspection questionnaire, are supportive of the school. They particularly value the commitment shown by the staff and the school's caring ethos. Many also said they appreciate the support they are given to support their children's learning.

Governors are very supportive of you and your staff and recognise your success in continuing to move the school forward since the previous inspection, despite the staffing challenges you have faced. Although many are new to the role, governors have an accurate view of what is working well and what could be improved. They have clear roles and responsibilities and they visit the school regularly. Governors have a good understanding of external information available to them, for example the inspection dashboard, and use this information well to hold school leaders to account for the progress that all pupils make.

Overall attendance has been below national rates for at least the last three years. While the majority of pupils attend regularly and on time, there are still a significant number of pupils who miss a lot of school. In some cases, this is with good reason, but not always. School leaders have taken steps to improve attendance; however, you acknowledge that there is still more to do.

Some groups of pupils did not achieve as well as others in reading and mathematics in 2016. This includes some more able pupils who did not achieve the higher levels they were targeted to achieve. You have analysed the reasons for this and made

some improvements. These improvements have resulted in all groups of pupils currently making strong rates of progress towards meeting the expected outcomes, including the more able pupils.

You and your team have worked hard to provide pupils with a broad, balanced and rich curriculum. You ensure that pupils are exposed to a wide range of educational experiences including sports, music, art, drama and dance. You have ensured that the curriculum meets the needs of your pupils by including every opportunity to develop pupils' spoken and written English language skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements and the school website contains the required information. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. Appropriate procedures are followed for the recruitment of staff. The checks on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough and detailed. All staff and governors recognise that they have a collective responsibility to keep pupils safe. You have established a strong safeguarding culture and staff and governors have undertaken appropriate, up-to-date training. Parents agree that their children are safe in school and children say they feel safe. As the school's designated safeguarding lead, you support vulnerable pupils and their families well and access support and advice from external agencies in a timely way.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers, including cyber bullying and how to stay safe when using the internet. You have a clear idea of the possible risks faced by the pupils and you make sure they are provided with the right information to enable them to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' attendance has been below national rates for at least the last three years and in 2016 pupil attendance was below national rates for almost all groups of pupils. You are aware of this and since September you have been supporting several families to improve their child's attendance. With some families, this has been very successful and has resulted in the number of pupils who are persistently absent being significantly reduced. You are continuing to offer support to families to ensure that all pupils attend school punctually and regularly.
- You use attendance information well to track and monitor the attendance of individual pupils and groups of pupils. Unauthorised absence for family holidays and extended leave of absence accounts for a significant proportion of absenteeism. You have made sure that the whole school community understands the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- The large majority of children enter school in Nursery working below the level expected for their age and with little or no English language. Due to the strong provision in early years, children make rapid progress and by the end of key stage 1 have reached standards at least in line with national expectations.

Although pupils continue to make progress through key stage 2, not enough pupils reach the higher standards, particularly in reading. Consequently in 2016, progress in reading lagged behind that in writing and mathematics and was below average.

- You are aware of this discrepancy and are taking actions to remedy it. You have reviewed your literacy planning and implemented guided reading sessions in all classes. You have invested in high-quality, challenging texts which enable teachers to engage and challenge more-able readers and stimulate high-quality discussion. You are promoting reading for pleasure in the classroom and in the school library. These actions have been effective and your current assessment information shows that more higher-attaining pupils are working at greater depth in reading.
- In 2016, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make as much progress as other children in reading and mathematics. You have analysed the reasons for this and ensured that provision for all pupils is strengthened. The school provides a wide range of interventions to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These interventions are tailored to match the individual needs of each pupil and include support within lessons as well as additional lessons outside the classroom. You also seek support from a wide range of external advisors. These improvements have resulted in nearly all pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities making at least expected progress and more of them making better than expected progress than was previously the case.
- Additional support is also provided to pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their learning. Because you closely monitor individual pupil progress you are able to put appropriate interventions in place quickly. This is resulting in more children making at least expected progress.
- You have a very clear rationale for the curriculum you provide to pupils. You ensure that you provide pupils with a wide range of experiences during their time at the school, for example a visit from the Royal Ballet and the opportunity for pupils to learn to play a range of musical instruments. You also ensure that the curriculum is matched to the needs of the pupils by taking every opportunity to develop their spoken and written English language skills. The development of pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural understanding is at the heart of the curriculum.
- During the inspection, observations of teaching and learning were carried out in all year groups. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to their learning. In Nursery, the children were highly engaged in the range of activities available to them. They had turned their role play area into an optician's where they were enthusiastically writing out prescriptions and appointment cards as well as practising their phonics reading the eye chart. In Year 2 pupils were clearly enjoying learning how to round numbers to the nearest 10. Older pupils were confident to discuss their learning with the inspector. Work in pupils' books demonstrate strong progress over time and reflect the pride that pupils take in their work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all adults in Nursery and Reception have a clear knowledge of individual children's next steps for learning so they can maximise learning opportunities
- the teaching of reading continues to develop so that pupils' progress accelerates further and a greater proportion achieve at the higher level
- initiatives to improve attendance are strengthened further so that attendance is at least in line with the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Satchwell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors over one day. Inspectors met with senior leaders to review the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. At this meeting, we agreed several lines of enquiry to ascertain the extent to which the school was maintaining a good standard of education.

Inspectors conducted a learning walk throughout the school with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, reviewing work in pupils' books, speaking to pupils and observing learning. An inspector listened to pupils from Year 2 read and spoke to pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' books across the school. We met with leaders to discuss assessment and attendance information.

Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body and with two representatives from the teaching school who provide staff training and school improvement support for leaders.

Inspectors conducted a range of safeguarding checks including a review of the school's single central record and the steps followed when recruiting new members of staff. A meeting was held with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss work with external agencies and how the school supports vulnerable children and their

families.

A wide range of documentation was scrutinized, including the school's website; governing body minutes; behaviour and bullying logs; the school's self-evaluation form; school improvement priorities; training records; and child protection files.

Inspectors met with parents before school and reviewed the internal parents' survey conducted by the school. The responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the staff survey were also analysed. There were no responses to the pupil survey.