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Mrs Elizabeth Snelling
Executive Headteacher
St Walburga's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy
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Dear Mrs Snelling

Short inspection of St Walburga's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 2019, 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 May 2012.

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 high expectations of pupils' achievements. In collaboration with other leaders, you have strengthened teaching in a number of priority areas, including mathematics and reading. As a result, pupils' attainment was significantly above average at the end of key stage 2 in 2018.

You have also expanded and developed the leadership team, capitalising on the skills of senior and middle leaders. Through this, you have built capacity for continuing improvement. This is particularly evident in leaders' work to ensure that the curriculum is broad, balanced and sufficiently challenging.

You have created a caring ethos in the school, where staff and pupils are considerate, supportive and empathetic towards one another. Staff habitually demonstrate effective teamwork, and pupils replicate this, cooperating well and developing strong social skills. You have ensured that music is highly valued in the school, and this contributes well to pupils' personal and spiritual development. Pupils have frequent opportunities to perform in productions and at charity events. The talented school choir receives expert tuition from the head of school and is held in high regard by the school community. Their harmonious singing is a clear representation of the unity which exists within the school.

Governors are proud to be a part of the school. They have a range of expertise and understand their responsibilities well. They share your ambition for pupils' academic

achievement and personal development. They are accurate in their view that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. You ensure that governors are well informed about the school's performance and its priorities. Governors use this information, along with reports from external consultants, to hold you and other leaders to account effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose and, hence, a culture of safeguarding exists in the school. Staff are aware of their responsibilities for keeping children safe. You ensure that they have regular training and you check that they know how to identify and support vulnerable pupils. Staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding communicate well with a range of external agencies. They make sure that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe in a range of contexts, including online. Lessons and assemblies are used to introduce and reinforce messages about safeguarding. Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Records in respect of this are organised and well maintained.

Inspection findings

- Since the school opened, you have focused considerable effort on improving teaching in mathematics. Pupils now benefit from teaching which is matched precisely to their starting points. Pupils who have not fully grasped a concept are identified promptly and are given additional support. Opportunities for pupils to reason mathematically and to solve problems are embedded in lessons. Through this daily application of knowledge and skills, pupils typically develop a deep mathematical understanding. As a result of this improvement to the quality of teaching, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards of learning has increased and is now above average.
- This academic year, working with other senior leaders and your wider staff team, you have redesigned the curriculum. Your plans for wider curriculum subjects, such as science and geography, now set out your expectations that pupils will build increasingly complex knowledge as they move through the school. Teachers are beginning to use pupils' starting points to create activities which provide a suitable level of challenge. Pupils enjoy their learning in the wider curriculum and are often knowledgeable about the topics they have studied. For example, during the inspection, Year 4 pupils shared their detailed knowledge of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. They were able to explain contrasting points of view, including those of environmentalists and loggers.
- Pupils' enthusiasm is further sparked through 'wow' days and focus weeks, which involve workshops and enrichment opportunities. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils' Second World War immersive experience brought their learning to life. Similarly, a whole-school science week saw pupils applying their scientific understanding across curriculum subjects.

- You have invested in developing the skills of subject leaders, and this has strengthened the capacity for further improvement. Subject leaders demonstrate high levels of expertise in their subject areas and have started to take responsibility for strengthening teaching. Following the curriculum redesign, their checks on pupils' outcomes have revealed pupils' good and improving progress, particularly for lower-attaining pupils and the most able, in a number of subjects.
- As the leader for disadvantaged pupils, you have a detailed understanding of the barriers to learning faced by pupils. Similarly, the experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with parents, carers and external agencies to build a clear picture of pupils' needs. You both ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils receive support which is tailored to their needs. This often involves emotional support, as well as additional or adapted teaching. You track the progress of each individual pupil to check whether the initiatives employed are making a positive difference. Some pupils from each of these two groups make very strong progress in a range of subjects. For a small number of pupils who face multiple barriers to learning, progress is more limited.
- Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is average, phonics teaching is not consistently effective for all pupils, particularly the lower-attaining pupils. These pupils have insufficient opportunities to hear and practise sounding out and blending to read words. Additionally, the books and resources they use to practise early reading are not matched tightly to their phonics knowledge. As a result, lower-attaining pupils struggle to read and lose confidence. This hampers their progress in both reading and spelling.
- Despite these shortcomings, you have ensured that almost all pupils read fluently by the end of key stage 1. You have given reading a high profile by exposing pupils to a wide range of appealing books through their class stories. Key stage 2 pupils who shared their views during the inspection expressed a real love of reading. They understand the value of reading in developing their creativity, broadening their vocabulary and supporting their well-being.
- You identified that although pupils' attainment in reading was above average at all key stages in 2017 and 2018, their progress was only average. Along with the English leader, you have revised the school's approach to teaching reading. Through professional development, teachers are now skilled in posing questions and designing activities to support pupils' understanding of text. However, progress for pupils remains average. Some pupils are not able to develop a deep understanding of books and, hence, reach their full potential.
- Another priority you have focused on this year has been to further raise pupils' outcomes in writing. It is evident that pupils' writing in some subjects, including in reading and mathematics, lacks basic skills. Pupils do not consistently apply age-appropriate English grammar, punctuation and spelling knowledge or handwriting skills. Because teachers' expectations of these aspects are not consistently high, pupils' progress in writing is not maximised.
- Your high expectations of pupils' conduct are shared by staff. Consequently, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are a strength of the school.

Pupils are, typically, independent, articulate and enthusiastic learners who consistently show respect for others. They demonstrate tolerant, inclusive views and are sensitive to the needs of their peers.

- Pupils enjoy their time at school. One parent reflected this, saying, 'My child wakes up every morning excited to go to St Walburga's.' This enthusiasm contributes to pupils' above-average rates of attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- phonics teaching is effective for all pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils, and the books and resources pupils use to practise early reading are matched precisely to their phonics knowledge
- pupils make strong progress in reading
- pupils apply age-appropriate English grammar, punctuation and spelling knowledge in their writing across a range of subjects consistently.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Karine Hendley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders and a representative of the trust. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the diocese. I observed teaching and learning with you and the head of school in classes across the school, including the Reception class. The Nursery class was not in the school at the time of the inspection. I listened to pupils read and scrutinised their work alongside the leaders for English, science, geography and religious education (RE). I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, and observed their behaviour around the school, including at playtime and lunchtime. I met with parents at the start of the day and took account of the 59 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 37 free-text responses. I reviewed school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation of its overall effectiveness and improvement plans, as well as information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance.