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27 November 2017

Mrs Elizabeth Higgins
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Higgins

Short inspection of St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. At the heart of this is a strong, shared commitment to every pupil's success, underpinned by the school's ethos: 'Learn, love and live with the Lord.' All pupils, regardless of background, race, faith or disability are cared for and supported to achieve. Pupils speak enthusiastically of their 'friendly school' where incidents of discrimination or hurtful behaviour are very rare. They are proud to be members of the school and confidently state that 'everyone matters'.

It is clear that you know your school well and are ambitious for your pupils, both academically and pastorally. Since joining the school in January 2014, you have ensured that academic standards continue to rise, particularly in the early years and in the younger year groups. You also make sure that pupils feel safe and enjoy school. The proportions of pupils reaching both expected and higher standards at age 11 are consistently above average. However, you rightly identify the strengths and slightly weaker aspects of the school's work, including recognising that some pupils would benefit from an even greater level of challenge. Good communication with your new senior leaders ensures that they, too, know what the school's priorities for further improvement are and what is expected of them. Parents value your strong leadership. Every parent who spoke with me told me that you are highly visible, approachable and very supportive. Parents were glowing in their praise of the school and its community spirit. One parent noted, 'I do feel we are like a big family' and this reflects the sense of gratitude that many parents wanted to convey for your dedicated care of their children.

Governors have a clear understanding of the many strengths in the school and know what could be even better. In response to the findings of the last inspection, they have worked closely with you to ensure that they have an accurate evaluation of the school and appropriate plans in place for further improvement. Governors have taken well-judged decisions in order to sustain the quality of their work. For example, they serve as associate governors before taking office to ensure that they have a secure knowledge and understanding of the school. Governors visit the school regularly to meet with teachers and to see for themselves the impact of actions taken to further improve the school.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked particularly to improve systems to review pupils' progress and make best use of assessment information, and to ensure that pupils made better progress in writing. You have introduced an effective system for tracking the progress that groups of pupils make in English and mathematics. Leaders' careful analysis of progress information ensures that support is given where it is needed. As a result, groups of pupils who were doing less well are now making rapid progress. Overall, pupils make strong progress, including, as a result of targeted work to improve, in writing. You rightly recognise that there is more to do to build on this success across the wider curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have created a culture where pupils' safety and well-being are given the highest priority. They keep detailed and clear records of all concerns regarding pupils. Leaders work effectively with a wide range of partner agencies, including the local authority, to keep pupils safe. Referrals, to secure additional support for families who need it, are detailed and timely.

Pupils feel safe in school and are taught how to keep safe, including when online. Older pupils are able to instantly recall key messages and complex concepts such as the 'digital footprint' they leave when using social media. Parents say they feel that pupils are safe in school. A few parents stated that they did not think the school always followed its own policy well to address issues of bullying. However, the pupils I spoke to around the school were unable to recall a time when they had not felt safe. Pupils are unanimous in their view that incidents of bullying are very rare and well managed by parents and staff working together. Parents told me how, if their children are anxious, they are effectively supported to overcome their fears and enjoy school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked at the improvements you have made to the teaching and learning of writing, and the impact of actions taken to ensure better progress in mathematics, particularly for the most able; the breadth and design of the curriculum; and how well leaders are ensuring that the school sustains and

builds on good provision in the light of recent significant staff and leadership changes.

- Improvements in writing are impressive. School leaders identified writing as an area needing improvement last academic year. They concentrated on improving the quality of teaching and opportunities for pupils to write at length in different subjects. It is clear that a wide range of good writing opportunities are available across the curriculum. Good progress in writing is visible in pupils' books across the year groups. Pupils benefit from clear modelling of tasks by teachers, and from editing their own work in response to teachers' feedback. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 was above the national average. The proportion achieving greater depth was in line with national figures. You rightly observe that some of the most able pupils would benefit from an even greater level of challenge in their writing tasks.
- Pupils attain well in mathematics and standards at the end of key stage 2 are generally well above the national average each year. However, your own analysis of pupils' progress across the school led to actions this school year to improve progress. The teaching of mathematics is already enhanced, as a result of an increased emphasis on pupils' mastery of key skills and the understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils of all abilities reason accurately, and some are able to solve complex problems in class. Across the school, pupils are exploring and deepening their understanding of key concepts in mathematics and enjoy exploring mathematical ideas in a variety of ways. As a result, the vast majority of pupils are making rapid progress, although there is still more to be done to ensure that all those who are capable of reaching a higher standard do so.
- You are well aware that the wider curriculum has not had the same attention paid to it as English and mathematics in the recent past. Over time, each pupil receives a broad and balanced curriculum, with some very high quality teaching and learning. Many pupils are highly motivated by opportunities to study topics in depth and to apply their knowledge. For example, they linked events in Ancient Greece to the system of democracy in Great Britain today and to the way in which their school council and house captains are elected. Work is in hand to ensure a greater level of challenge through all subjects, including using more detailed assessment to track progress.
- You have successfully inducted new leaders, so that they understand the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. In turn, they are supporting new staff effectively, to ensure that their practice quickly reaches St Edmunds' high standards. As a result, staff report feeling valued for their professional skills and well supported to achieve the school's vision. Leaders, including school governors, have benefited from opportunities to become involved with the school before taking up post and, consequently, they undertake their roles and responsibilities with understanding and with a great commitment to further improving the school. Leadership across the school remains strong.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are consistently challenged so that a larger proportion achieve the higher standards
- they keep careful track of pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that standards are consistently high across the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clare Morgan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Together, you and I visited classes at work across the school. I looked at a range of work in pupils' books, including the work of those pupils who were in Year 6 last year, spoke to pupils around the school and met the school council. I met parents before school and scrutinised 58 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, and checked the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.