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Mrs Julia Bramhall
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Bramhall

Short inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since then, there have been a number of changes to staffing. Since your appointment as headteacher in April 2014 following the previous inspection, you have made changes to the leadership structure and appointed two assistant headteachers. Middle-leadership roles have been developed and your strong team ensures that pupils at Sacred Heart grow and develop as confident, articulate and caring young people.

You, the staff and governors have created a warm and welcoming environment. Displays around the school and in classrooms are colourful and celebrate the wide range of opportunities available to pupils. You have high expectations of pupils and you strive for them to be 'the best they can be' in all areas of life. Your focus on the 'development of the whole child' ensures that you introduce pupils to enriching activities, from debating clubs to gardening and museum trips. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and say that lessons are 'fun'. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils feel well cared for and behave extremely well in lessons, around the school and during social times. The school's Catholic ethos is strong. Pupils are respectful of others, regardless of differences, stating: 'We are all part of God's family – related as brothers and sisters.'

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and your leadership. They are happy that their children settle quickly into school life and appreciate the 'family feel' you and the staff create. Staff feel valued and believe that their well-being is considered. They say that they are given many opportunities for professional development and all enjoy working at Sacred Heart.

You and the governors are aware of the school's strengths and the areas which you need to develop further. You are aspirational for the school and its pupils. Governors are highly committed, passionate and know the school well. They hold you and your team firmly to account to ensure that leaders and teachers continue to deliver good-quality education to pupils.

Governors and leaders have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Inspectors identified the need to improve attainment and progress for all groups of pupils by making full use of assessment information and targets. In response, you made significant changes to assessment systems across the school to make sure that all staff have access to the most recent assessment information to inform their planning. You and your staff know all pupils well and set them appropriately challenging and aspirational targets. Regular pupils' progress meetings, focusing on assessment information, provide opportunities for teachers to identify quickly any pupils who are in need of additional support. They follow this up by making sure they receive targeted and well-planned interventions. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, the attainment and progress of current learners is strong.

Following the previous inspection, you improved the quality of leadership and management by restructuring staffing to create clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all. You and the chair of governors are committed to providing high-quality professional development for staff to update their skills and increase the strengths of your team. For example, you have trained support staff in gardening and now have chickens and allotments where pupils can grow their own vegetables and fruit. Plans are in place for a Sacred Heart 'bake-off' competition, where pupils are going to bake using what they have grown themselves in school. Pupils and parents value these activities and praise the leadership opportunities provided by pupils' roles, such as 'eco-warriors'. As a result, staff have the confidence to develop ideas and activities, pupils enjoy their learning and an atmosphere of mutual respect and warmth permeates the school.

During the inspection, you acknowledged that strategies for monitoring pupils' progress across the wider curriculum need further development. You have appropriate plans in place to achieve this, alongside ensuring that high expectations are evident across all areas of the curriculum, not just in core subjects. Senior and middle leaders are developing ways to track progression in foundation subjects, taking measures to increase staff's subject knowledge and are embarking on a programme of quality assurance in this area. This is intended to ensure that governors are able to hold subject leaders to account for the progress of pupils in all year groups and across the wider curriculum as firmly as they do in reading, writing and mathematics. You also acknowledged that embedding the stretch and challenge of pupils based on their individual starting points is a key priority in helping pupils to reach their full potential.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures for recruiting staff meet statutory requirements and staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, both online and personally. They understand

clearly the risks of social media and are taught about a range of issues, including healthy eating, mental health and water safety. You and your team are aware of the needs of pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, and liaise effectively with external agencies to support pupils and their families effectively.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection say that bullying is rare and that if it does occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff. All pupils said that there is an adult in the school they feel able to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils feel safe on site and trust the adults and their peers to look out for them. Parents and staff agree. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of this inspection, we considered a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these looked at how effectively leaders are improving outcomes for key stage 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils across key stage 2, including the most able, are making good progress in reading. Leaders have changed their approach to the teaching of reading and pupils are exposed to high-quality texts which contain rich vocabulary. Books are at the heart of learning at this school. Leaders have carefully analysed previous test results and have worked to improve pupils' stamina. They have developed a clear system for teaching comprehension skills so that pupils are aware of how to answer questions and decide which skills they are required to use. Pupils from a local high school visit the school weekly to hear pupils read. They act as good reading role models for younger children. Current information provided by school leaders shows that the majority of Year 6 pupils are on track to reach the expected standard. A high proportion of pupils are on track to achieve greater depth.
- Leaders' focus on spelling and handwriting has ensured that most pupils are on track to achieve expected standards in writing, with some pupils aiming to achieve greater depth. Regular spelling and vocabulary tests are improving pupils' outcomes and a focus on 'purpose and audience' across the school is improving progress in writing. Leaders are clear that academic success is a result of the cumulative effect of good teaching throughout the whole of pupils' time at the school, not just in Year 6. Leaders use the analogy of a bobsleigh team to demonstrate to staff that the four years in key stage 2 are an essential part of the success story. Their motto is: 'We are all in it together.'
- The progress of current pupils in mathematics is good. Few pupils achieved greater depth at key stage 2 in 2016. This proportion rose in 2017 and the upward trend looks set to continue for current pupils. They are actively engaged in practical mathematical activities and there are many opportunities planned for them to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- The second line of enquiry considered the progress of key stage 1 pupils in reading, particularly the most able pupils. Leaders are committed to improving the vocabulary of children right from the start when they enter the early years. Again, a focus on engaging, high-quality texts is having a positive effect on the attainment of current key stage 1 pupils. Pupils of all ages say that they enjoy reading, both their class and independent reading books. Pupils talked excitedly about a range of texts, from 'How

to grow a dinosaur' to 'Wonder' and 'I am Malala'. Teachers in key stage 1 consistently follow the school's approach to teaching reading, with a focus on comprehension skills. Information provided by the school indicates that a good proportion of key stage 1 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are attaining in line with the standards expected for their age.

- Another key line of enquiry looked at the progress of pupils in science and across the wider curriculum. Pupils enjoy science lessons and talked with enthusiasm about the wide range of experiments they have carried out. Work seen in books shows that pupils are covering the content of the national curriculum and are beginning to learn the skills required to be a scientist. Leaders acknowledge that the assessment of pupils' progress across the foundation subjects is a priority for subject leaders. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a range of subjects, including art, drama, music and a wide variety of sports. Subject leaders' development of tracking pupils' progress means that consistency is improving across the year groups and that the skills and knowledge being taught can be built upon year by year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the consistency of teaching and assessment across the wider curriculum so that they match the good practice seen in the core subjects
- teachers stretch and challenge pupils so that they make good or better progress from their individual starting points across a broad range of subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and a group of subject leaders. In addition, I met with the chair of the governing body and spoke to representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Shrewsbury by telephone. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You accompanied me on visits to classes where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and the school's assessment of pupils' progress and attainment. I scrutinised a range of policies and the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation report. I also undertook a review of the school's website.

As part of the inspection, I considered 27 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and I took into account the responses to a questionnaire for parents conducted by the school. I also spoke with parents informally on the playground.