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Mr Morgan Williams
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Dear Mr Williams

Short inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school has undergone significant change in the last five years, including moving to new premises and a change of leadership. Since becoming headteacher of the school in September 2016, you have quickly secured the necessary improvements to ensure that St Thomas More Catholic Primary School remains a vibrant, purposeful place in which to learn, and where the education provided is underpinned by its distinctive Catholic ethos.

Your vision and passion for improving the learning experiences of every individual are 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 for writing, following a dip in the writing results in 2016. These improvements have had a clear impact on the development of pupils' writing skills and, as a result, standards in writing 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 in line with those expected for their age. The language-rich environment and excellent support from adults ensure that children quickly develop the necessary learning skills to ensure that they are able to progress well. The majority of children achieve a good level of development by the time they reach the end of their Reception Year and are very well prepared for the challenges of key stage 1. All adults working in the early years have a good understanding of the

children's individual next steps for learning and use this knowledge well to create exciting learning experiences which motivate and engage the children.

The school is rightly proud of its Catholic ethos. The school achieves its aim to ensure that pupils 'learn and grow as God's holy people'. Staff and pupils are happy and proud of their school. During the inspection, pupils were enthusiastic about sharing their learning with us when we visited their classrooms and confidently explained what they were learning. Pupils throughout the school show highly positive attitudes to their learning. They are extremely polite and well mannered, and their conduct around the school is excellent.

You have addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection well. You have ensured that learning is well matched to what pupils can do and that the majority of the most able pupils are sufficiently 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 ensure that this practice is consistent across all year groups and classes.

You have significantly strengthened senior leadership. All members of the senior leadership team work together as a highly effective unit, ensuring that school improvement priorities are achieved. These leaders speak highly of the opportunities and support you have given them. You have rightly identified the need for further training for senior leaders, which will enable them to carry out their roles with greater independence and confidence. You have established a robust system of staff appraisal, ensuring that teachers' targets are linked to the progress pupils make and the school's improvement priorities. Staff say that they value the training and support they receive.

You work hard to develop good relationships with parents and carers, providing pastoral care and support where necessary. The vast majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are very supportive of and complimentary about the school. They particularly value the commitment shown by the staff and the school's caring ethos.

Governors are a strength of the school. They have clear roles and responsibilities. They are very supportive of you and your staff and visit the school regularly. They recognise your success in moving the school forward since you became headteacher. Although many are new to the role, governors have an accurate view of what is working well and what the areas for improvement are. They particularly value the comprehensive information you provide to them, which enables them to carry out their roles well. They have a very good understanding of external information available to them, for example the information dashboard. They use this information well to hold school leaders to account for the progress that all pupils make.

In the past, some groups of pupils did not achieve as well as others in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes some disadvantaged pupils and lower-attaining pupils who did not make the progress they should have. Since starting at the school, you have analysed the reasons for this and quickly made improvements. These improvements have resulted in more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, making strong progress

towards meeting, and in many cases exceeding, the outcomes expected for their age. However, you acknowledge that still more needs to be done in order to ensure that even more pupils make consistently strong progress.

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 well and enables them to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills across a wide range of subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and the school website contains all the required information. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. The checks on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough and detailed.

You have established a strong safeguarding culture and staff and governors have undertaken appropriate, up-to-date training. All staff and governors are knowledgeable about the procedures for keeping children safe and recognise that they have a collective responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Parents agree that their children are safe in school and pupils say that 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 when using the internet. You have a clear idea of the possible risks faced by pupils and you make sure that they are provided with the right information to enable them to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- Since taking over as headteacher, you have established a robust and accurate system of school self-assessment. This system is underpinned by a rigorous framework of monitoring and evaluation which enables you to identify appropriate improvement priorities and ensure that the actions taken improve provision and outcomes for pupils. For example, you identified that pupils' attitudes towards learning were not as positive as they should be. Consequently, you introduced a programme to help pupils improve their behaviour for learning through developing their independence and a positive 'can-do' attitude. Pupils are now resilient learners. They are confident about having a go and see making mistakes as an important part of their learning journey.
- The roles and responsibilities within the wider senior leadership team have been reviewed and are sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Consequently, this team is now highly effective at supporting your drive and commitment to ensuring that the school continues to improve. You are keen to develop the skills of these leaders further by identifying training that will enable them to assume greater responsibility and work more independently. Leadership and management are further strengthened by governors

who know the school well and provide appropriate levels of support and challenge. The capacity for further improvement is strong.

- You have established an effective system of assessment and you use the information this provides well to identify improvement priorities and implement improvement plans rapidly. For example, assessment information from the 2017 summer term showed that writing results for children in Year 2 had dipped, with only 68% of pupils achieving the standard expected for their age and only 13% of pupils working at greater depth. The action plan you put in place for this cohort of children ensured that, by the end of the autumn term, these figures had increased to 78% and 42%, respectively. This is a significant improvement.
- For several years, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has been behind that of other pupils. In 2016, progress for these pupils was in the lowest 10% when compared to national data. In your first year as headteacher, you implemented actions to improve provision and support for disadvantaged pupils. School assessment information shows that, at May 2017, the progress for disadvantaged pupils across the school was good in reading, writing and mathematics. While the progress for disadvantaged pupils continues to improve, you recognise that still more needs to be done to ensure that more disadvantaged pupils can achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Through your analysis of assessment information, you identified that not enough of the most able pupils were achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. You have implemented changes to the provision for these subjects to ensure that most-able pupils are appropriately challenged and supported to reach these higher standards. Your assessment information shows that the percentage of pupils working at greater depth in reading and mathematics has increased significantly in almost all year groups. However, you acknowledge that not enough pupils are currently achieving the higher standards in writing. You and your leadership team are continuing to implement changes to the writing curriculum to ensure that more pupils achieve the higher standards.
- You have a very clear rationale for the curriculum. You ensure that you provide pupils with a wide range of experiences during their time at the school. For example, all pupils complete a course in forest school education, have the opportunity to learn to play the ukulele and take part in cultural diversity days. You ensure that the curriculum is matched to the needs of the pupils by taking every opportunity to develop their independence and thinking skills. The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is an important part of the curriculum.
- During the inspection, observations of teaching and learning were carried out in nearly all year groups. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrated highly positive attitudes to their learning. In Nursery, the children were clearly enjoying the range of outdoor activities available to them. Reception children were all actively engaged in a wide range of activities linked to the story of The Gingerbread Man. They could confidently discuss the 'challenges' that they were required to complete each day. In Year 2, pupils were clearly enjoying learning how to solve problems involving fractions. In Year 6, pupils were confidently grappling with challenging mathematical problems, demonstrating resilience and a determination to succeed. Teaching observed was very effective at ensuring that pupils strengthened their understanding and developed their

mathematical thinking. Work in pupils' books demonstrates strong progress over time and reflects the pride that pupils take in their work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they ensure that the challenge for the most able pupils is consistent across all classes so that all pupils are supported to fulfil their potential and that more pupils work at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics
- they continue to improve provision for disadvantaged and lower-attaining pupils so that they can make rapid and accelerated progress towards achieving the standards of which they are capable
- they continue to develop the leadership skills of senior leaders so that they can fulfil their responsibilities with confidence and greater independence.

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 Coventry. 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 one inspector over one day. The inspector 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.

The inspector conducted a learning walk throughout the school with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, reviewing work in pupils' books, speaking to pupils and observing learning. The inspector spoke to pupils from Years 4 and 6. A scrutiny of pupils' books across the school was carried out with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and a meeting was held with leaders to discuss assessment and attendance information. The inspector also met with representatives from the school's governing body.

A range of safeguarding checks were carried out, 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 scrutinised, 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.

The lead inspector reviewed the internal parents' survey conducted by the school, as well as the 43 free-text responses and 110 responses on the Parent View website, and the 25 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.