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Mrs Karen O'Hare
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs O'Hare

Short inspection of St Edward's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 St Edward's Catholic Primary School was judged to be good in October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You are passionate about the care and the quality of education that pupils experience. You know every pupil exceptionally well and every pupil's education matters to you. You want the best for each pupil academically, socially and personally. You communicate these aspirations effectively to staff, governors, parents and pupils. At St Edward's, there is a distinctive sense of cooperation and partnership across the school. Staff say that you have created a culture of teamwork. One staff member commented, 'There is no sense of hierarchy here; we are genuinely a team working together for our children.'

With your capable assistant headteacher and your effective subject leaders, you ensure that the quality of teaching across the school remains high. As a result, pupils make good progress in a variety of subjects across a wide and engaging curriculum. However, you are not complacent and rightly recognise in your accurate self-evaluation where there is further improvement to make. Standards of attainment across the school are generally good but more can be achieved, especially for the most able pupils. You acknowledge that these pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to reach their potential and expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve should be raised.

It is very clear that you, governors and staff are working towards a shared vision, with a clear focus on improving further the outcomes for all pupils, especially the more able.

School development planning does not provide sufficiently clear or precise targets for improvement. As a result, leaders and governors are not able to monitor improvements to best effect. Governors are committed to school improvement but recognise that they need to improve the range of their skills. Governors do not currently use a broad enough range of information on pupils' achievements. For example, they consider pupil outcomes at the end of each key stage, but do not look closely enough at pupils' progress in different classes. This limits the impact that governors have on improving outcomes for all pupils, especially the most able. As a result, they are not fully effective in providing challenge and holding leaders to account.

Your subject leader for mathematics has introduced a new mathematics curriculum and designed new resources. Pupils now have more opportunities to focus on problem-solving to deepen their mathematical understanding. This is improving teaching in mathematics, seen in pupils' work in books, so that pupils are making better progress. In one lesson, for example, I saw pupils working through some complicated problems involving capacity. They worked with focus and with determination. This new approach is not yet making enough of a difference to outcomes for the most able pupils in Year 6.

Children in the early years get off to a good start with their education. During the Reception year, children are provided with a good range of well-structured activities, enabling them to make good progress and preparing them well for learning in Year 1. Adults question and support children effectively so that they develop their skills well. Children leave Reception with skills similar to those of other children nationally.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and well mannered. Tolerance and respect for all is clear in their work and in their behaviour. Pupils' personal development and behaviour, strengths at the time of the previous inspection, continue to be strong. Pupils' enjoy their learning and concentrate well in lessons. Those I spoke to were very enthusiastic about their school and told me how much they enjoyed their work, in particular in reading and in mathematics.

Leaders make good use of the primary physical education and sport premium, which has resulted in a greater participation in sport and in pupils' understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The majority of the pupil premium funding is used to pay for teaching assistants. This additional support is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes across a range of subjects. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for at St Edward's. They are supported well, their progress is tracked in detail and the special educational needs coordinator has a clear and detailed overview of every pupil who has a special educational need and/or disability. As a result, they make good progress in the school in this caring and nurturing environment.

Safeguarding is effective.

You make certain that effective recruitment procedures are in place. Appropriate checks are carried out on staff, governors and volunteers to ensure their suitability to work with children. Safeguarding training is updated regularly, and staff follow the school policies and procedures if they have any concerns about a pupil. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns, and leaders quickly follow up concerns from staff. As a result of clear

safeguarding procedures and practice, together with a well-planned and broad curriculum, pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they work and play outside. Pupils say that they feel safe and parents agree.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on the key lines of enquiry which we agreed. The first of these was looking at how reading had improved since the last inspection. Attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, and in phonics at the end of Year 1, was close to or above national averages in 2016. However, pupils' progress in reading from key stage 1 to key stage 2 was slower than that of pupils nationally. This was due to the most able readers in school not reaching their true potential. During our discussion, you told me about the new and more consistent approaches to teaching reading that you have put in place. Reading is given a high priority and much work is done to promote reading across the curriculum. This is raising standards in reading for all pupils.
- I listened to readers and spoke with them about their reading. I also looked at your assessment information on the progress made by pupils in their reading. I was able to see the good progress that pupils make, including middle ability and least able, in reading and phonics. This is as a result of your new approaches to the teaching and development of reading across the school. You plan fixed times for all pupils to read during the day and have invested in reading resources across the school. This is clearly making a difference. However, we agreed that more could be done to ensure that the most able readers make better progress to achieve their potential. This is a key priority for the school.
- We also agreed to look at the progress of your most-able writers because writing progress over time was slower than in other subjects. Pupils' workbooks demonstrate that most pupils make good progress in writing. Over time, sentence construction is more complex and handwriting is improving, as is spelling accuracy too. For a small number of most-able pupils, progress is slower than it should be, confirmed by your assessment information. You acknowledge that ensuring consistently good progress for all pupils, especially the most able, is a key priority and you plan to do this by increasing the complexity and range of writing for the most able.
- We also agreed to look at the effectiveness of the curriculum in ensuring that all pupils and groups of pupils have their needs and interests met. This was because, over time, there were variations in outcomes for different groups of pupils, in particular the most able. We looked at how assessment was used to check that the curriculum matched the needs of pupils well. I spoke with subject leaders and to pupils about the subjects they are taught and how this has been improved.
- You told me that you were focusing much of the curriculum development work on ensuring that all pupils benefit from experiencing a wide range of subjects, with more opportunities for problem-solving. The curriculum design and new approaches to learning in computing, science and mathematics are well mapped out to meet the needs of pupils across all classes. The mixed-age classes present you with some challenges, but you and your team have worked hard to develop a curriculum that works well in providing a rich and varied experience of topics, activities and approaches to learning. These build pupils' skills and knowledge well across a variety of subjects but do not yet

fully cater for the needs of more-able pupils.

- Staff are well deployed and are used flexibly and effectively to ensure that all pupils have access to a wide range of opportunities. This includes the deployment of teaching assistants to support pupils who are in receipt of pupil premium funding to ensure that they are achieving well across the curriculum.
- You and your team have ensured that the assessment and tracking system is effective and provides you with a clear analysis of the attainment and progress of individual pupils and of different groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You review this data regularly to ensure that any pupil falling behind can receive timely support, but this is not yet developed well enough to ensure that the most able reach their potential.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve school development plans by linking improvement priorities to clear targets, checkpoints and impact measures that can be regularly reviewed
- governors develop the range of skills required to hold leaders to account for school performance effectively
- governors get the fullest possible picture of how well the school is performing to improve their self-evaluation and identify whether their support and challenge are effective
- progress continues to improve for the most able pupils in mathematics, reading and writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Tonge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your assistant headteacher, curriculum leaders, the key stage 1 leader and other staff members. I met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. I spoke with the school improvement partner. I heard a group of pupils read and spoke to a group of pupils from across the school. We visited the classrooms together to observe pupils and to talk to them about their learning. Work across a range of pupils' ability groups was examined. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into account the responses of 49 parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. This included free-text comments that many had made. There

were 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 18 responses to the pupils' questionnaire. A wide range of documentation and information relating to your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, curriculum, assessment, monitoring and safeguarding was examined.