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Mrs Dawn Ormes
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Dear Mrs Ormes

Short inspection of St Winefride's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You ensure that St Winefride's Catholic Primary is a welcoming and caring school where pupils behave well and take pride in their learning. You have established a positive ethos where leaders show a deep commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is echoed in your motto that all should 'learn, laugh, listen, live and love in the presence of Jesus'. You have invested in enriching the curriculum to widen the experiences for pupils, including some opportunities they would not normally access. These enrichments have been successful in widening pupils' horizons. You are rightly proud of the school's sporting achievements and many special events, trips and visitors. Pupils are enthused by their learning and told me that, 'Every day is exciting. You never know what is going to happen'.

Parents and carers, staff and governors are proud to belong to the school, a reflection of the positive and productive relationships between everyone. One comment, on Parent View, was typical of many: 'Children are extremely happy and enjoy the caring and nurturing environment. There always seems to be so much going on to stretch their imagination and challenge them to learn new skills.'

Together with governors, you and the leadership team evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses honestly and accurately. You have used this information well and have taken decisive action to address areas for improvement since the last inspection.

You were asked to improve teaching even further by making sure that pupils do as much as they can in lessons and checking that pupils understand how to improve their work. All staff have received additional training to ensure that work is pitched at the right level to challenge pupils of different abilities. Pupils are taught to take greater control over their learning. They do this, for example, by carefully checking that work is accurate and editing it before the end of the lesson. Work in mathematics and English books shows that older pupils gradually become more independent in correcting their own errors and making improvements. Books show that pupils produce good-quality work representing their best efforts. Teachers ask questions to make pupils think carefully when completing tasks. This helps pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, when examining the work of the painter Franz Marc, they are challenged to explain the emotion and purpose of the painter and not just to describe the image.

Leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and provide appropriate support for staff when required. Experienced teachers model good practice in their areas of expertise, providing direction and helping less experienced staff. You plan training for staff that focuses specifically on areas for school improvement. This has included improving the accuracy of teachers' assessment.

The leadership team and governing body continue to ensure that pupils achieve well. Governors have a sharp insight into the quality of education that the school provides. They visit the school regularly and are kept well informed about the progress that the school is making. They use their expertise to challenge and support you to make further improvements. For example, they ask incisive questions about the impact of additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and how it is improving outcomes for these pupils. Governors are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities and fulfil these well.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All safeguarding arrangements are robust; records are accurately maintained and securely stored. Checks on staff working at the school follow statutory guidance. Staff and governors receive regular training and annual updates about current safeguarding practice. This means that staff know what to do should they identify any concerns. You work well with external agencies, including the local authority, which provides more specialist support for pupils when needed.

Through the curriculum and in assemblies, pupils are taught to understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if they have a problem and know it will be dealt with quickly. Pupils are well prepared to deal with any incidents.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry for this inspection was to find out whether children in early years were making enough progress. The school's own assessments show

that approximately three quarters of the children arrive in school with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. The available published data shows that outcomes for children in early years have fluctuated. Boys especially were below average in their good level of development for two out of the last three years. Your own assessments show that the most able children are not identified quickly enough. You explained that there are some discrepancies in the accuracy of assessments when children arrive in school. Further work is needed to improve communication with pre-school providers, so that accurate information helps teachers to plan work at the right level.

- The new early years leader has already identified where improvements are needed. The learning environment has been reorganised with more interesting and challenging activities. Children are taught to read and blend sounds with increasing accuracy. They practise their writing daily and their learning records show that children improve their skills. Children are encouraged to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in imaginative and exciting ways. For instance, great concentration was shown when a child tried to open a safe. This entailed finding and spelling the 'secret word' to break the code. Good teaching and higher expectations are improving the progress of all children. These improvements are not fully embedded to enable more children to reach and exceed the early learning goals by the end of Reception.
- The second focus for the inspection was to find the reasons behind the sharp dip in pupils' attainment and progress in 2018 in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and whether this affects current pupils. Pupils' work seen during this inspection, the school's own analysis and reports from external advisers make it clear that this set of results is not typical of the achievement of pupils across the school. The composition of the cohort in Year 2 in 2018 was unusual and included a much higher than average number of pupils with SEND. Swift action was taken to provide appropriate support for pupils. This action has been positive and pupils currently in school are making good progress in these subjects.
- Next, I wanted to find out whether the substantial improvements made in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 have been sustained. I also wanted to check that the improvements were mirrored across the school. Following advice from the local authority in 2016 and 2017, teachers were very cautious when assessing pupils' work. You do not think their assessments at that time were an accurate reflection of the progress that pupils made. Changes to the advice and improvements in teaching mean that the rise in standards in writing has been maintained. Effective phonics teaching is giving pupils the confidence to write with increasing fluency in Year 1. Older pupils are taught to evaluate and edit their own work and know how to improve it, for example through redrafting. There are ample opportunities for pupils to practise writing in subjects other than English and they apply their skills accurately. Books show that pupils are making good progress in their writing.
- For the next line of enquiry, I wanted to find out why outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are lower than for other pupils in school, especially in reading and mathematics. The results of national assessment show that very few disadvantaged pupils are gaining the higher standards at the end of Year 6.

Additional adult support has been employed to enable pupils to work in small groups. You monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely. Governors track the use of additional pupil premium funding to ensure that it is used effectively. Despite these improvements, a greater focus on helping to remove barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils is needed to ensure that aspirations remain high for these pupils.

- Finally, I investigated why attendance rates are lower than average in school and why more pupils are likely to be persistently absent, especially disadvantaged pupils. It is clear from the school's information that most absences are genuine. Some, however, are due to extended holidays abroad, which the school has not authorised. You have taken action, and the newly appointed attendance team works hard to encourage good attendance. It builds positive relationships with parents and encourages them to place a higher value on pupils' attending school regularly. Despite this stronger response to absence, overall attendance remains a problem for some pupils who do not benefit from the maximum amount of teaching time. The school's data systems that record attendance do not provide timely information to help staff intervene promptly. There is not enough clarity about the timing of actions and what these should be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they have accurate information for children entering Reception and continue to embed the good quality of teaching, so that more children, especially boys, attain a good level of development
- initiatives to support disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are further developed, so that outcomes improve across the curriculum
- they embed the changes to improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

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 Cheshire West and Chester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Parkinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and some subject leaders. I met with two school administrators and members of the governing body, including the chair. I visited several classes with you to observe teaching and learning. Together with some teachers, I looked at pupils' work. I met with a group of pupils from the school council. I took account of the 44 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and evaluated 39 free-text responses from parents. I considered the 18 responses from staff to the Ofsted online questionnaire and 58 responses from pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I viewed a range of information about pupils' attainment and progress. I scrutinised the safeguarding document and I undertook a review of the school's website.