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Dear Mr Foley

Short inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 February 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

'This school is like our family' and 'I am very happy to be in this school' were just some of the comments made by pupils about their school. The parents I spoke with during the inspection were equally positive about the school, and particularly about the high level of care shown by staff towards their children.

The school experienced significant turbulence in staffing last year. You were appointed as the acting headteacher in October 2015. At the same time the assistant headteacher was appointed as the acting deputy headteacher. You were appointed as the permanent headteacher of the school during the week of this inspection and prior to the publication of this report. The majority of class teachers are new to the school. They were not in post at the time of the previous inspection in 2011.

The school's efforts to raise attainment in mathematics were hampered last academic year by the changes in staffing and some weaknesses in teaching. Senior leaders have taken effective action to strengthen teaching. Staff have benefited from training and support with the teaching of this subject. As a consequence pupils across the school are reaching higher standards in mathematics than previously.

Teaching in the early years has improved since the previous inspection. Staff gather a range of appropriate information about children's learning. They use this information well to plan group activities that build on what children already know and understand. Occasionally, the activities that children choose to complete on their own are too easy and do not provide children with a sufficient level of challenge. Staff in the early years place a strong emphasis on children's language development. During the inspection, the children in early years spoke to me with confidence about their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective. The pupils I spoke with confirmed that they feel safe and that teachers respond quickly to any concerns they may have. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school's 'pupil digital leaders' play an important role in the school. They regularly provide other pupils in the school with helpful information about using the internet and modern technology with care.

The school's business manager maintains up-to-date records on all training relating to keeping pupils safe. This includes training undertaken by staff, governors and temporary teachers. The school's safeguarding policy is regularly reviewed to ensure that it includes the most recent guidance from the government. Staff and governors are fully aware of the actions they need to take if they believe a pupil is potentially vulnerable or at risk.

All the parents I spoke with, and almost all the parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, were positive about the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. One parent stated, 'no words can describe the support available from staff'.

Inspection findings

- You provide strong leadership. You are persistent in your drive to ensure that pupils receive the best education possible, develop positive attitudes to learning and become good role models. Other senior leaders, staff and governors share your vision for the school. The parents I spoke with were complimentary about the actions you have taken, and are taking, to help their children succeed.
- The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015 were not as high as previously. In part this was due to some weaknesses in provision and in part due to pupil mobility. The school's own information shows that the standards attained by pupils who were in the school throughout Years 1 and 2 were broadly similar to pupils nationally. Although the pupils who joined Year 2 partway during the school year made the progress they should, it was not enough to help them all to reach the standards expected for their age. Some of these new pupils were in the early stages of learning English.
- In 2015 the standards attained by Year 6 pupils were similar to pupils nationally in writing and mathematics, and broadly similar in reading.

Their attainment was above average in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Some of the pupils in Year 6, and particularly some of the girls, did not make as much progress as pupils nationally in reading and mathematics.

- You and other senior leaders have taken suitable and decisive action in response to the 2015 results. Different groups of pupils currently in the school are making good progress over time in reading and mathematics. You are not complacent about these improvements in pupils' achievement. You acknowledge that occasionally a few teachers do not make sure that the activities they set provide sufficient challenge for pupils of different abilities and that this can sometimes slow pupils' learning. Your plans to provide further support and training for these teachers are appropriate.
- Visits to lessons, discussions with pupils and work in pupils' books confirm that girls and boys across the school have a secure understanding of numbers and place value. Pupils correctly use their knowledge of addition, subtraction, division and multiplication to solve a range of mathematical problems. Pupils in Year 6 are particularly confident mathematicians. 'Our teacher makes maths fun,' exclaimed a group of Year 6 girls. Pupils in this year group also told me that they thoroughly enjoy solving complex problems because the problems 'make them think hard'!
- The school's provision for reading has improved significantly. Senior leaders have purchased reading books that interest boys and girls. Pupils new to English, and those who are struggling with their reading, receive effective additional support. Teachers also make sure that the reading activities they plan help pupils to make strong gains with their reading. In Year 4 for instance, the teacher successfully helped a group of pupils to explore the meanings of different words and retrieve relevant information from a piece of text. At the same time, another group of pupils used their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to spell unfamiliar words correctly. One pupil enjoyed taking on the role of the 'teacher' with this group. This pupil effectively helped those in the group who were not quite sure about their spellings, to spell accurately.
- Pupils make good progress with their writing. Some make exceptional progress. This is because teachers plan activities that are exciting and engaging. Teachers also emphasise the importance of correct spellings, punctuation and grammar as pupils write. Pupils in Year 2, for instance, were excited to tell me about their visit to 'Cadbury World' and their subsequent written report about what they saw and what they did during their visit. Pupils are becoming better at presenting their work neatly. Some of the children in Reception were keen to show me their 'joined-up' writing as they spelled words with the sound 'oo'.
- You and other senior leaders regularly check the work of teachers. You visit lessons and review pupils' work regularly. You also meet with class teachers and teaching assistants to discuss the progress of individual pupils and the actions that will be taken to help pupils achieve their learning targets. Sometimes the actions that are agreed with teachers are too general. They do not identify the exact actions that teachers will

take. Also, some leaders do not make it clear when they will check that these actions have been implemented. Consequently, some leaders do not always identify any emerging issues in teaching or pupils' achievement quickly enough.

- In all classes, pupils respond with enthusiasm towards their learning activities and when asked to work with their classmates. Pupils are polite and thoughtful. During the inspection they confidently introduced themselves to me and talked to me about their work. In the playground, pupils share and use equipment sensibly. They enjoy participating in the organised games and sporting activities organised by the school's sports coaches.
- Pupils spoke very positively about 'take over day'. They explained that they have the opportunity to apply for 'jobs', attend an interview and, if successful, undertake the 'job'. The pupils who became the 'headteacher', 'deputy headteacher' and 'members of parliament' spoke enthusiastically about what they did and how much they enjoyed their roles.
- The school's curriculum gives pupils the chance to take part in a wide range of enjoyable activities. Pupils told me that these activities make learning fun. Last year a group of pupils entered a national competition to design a 'Formula 1' racing car. They learned about engineering and they came fifth nationally. Earlier this year staff, children and parents in Nursery organised a 'bake off.' Pupils learnt how to bake and at the same time raised money for the school.
- Members of the governing body are supportive. They ask appropriate questions about teaching and the achievement of different groups of pupils during meetings and visits to the school. However, the way in which senior leaders collate information about teaching, pupils' progress and additional funding such as pupil premium is overly complicated. This makes it difficult for governors to rigorously check if the actions taken by senior leaders are making enough of a difference. Additionally, governors acknowledge the need to check more frequently the impact of additional funding on pupils' achievement so that they can report more precisely to parents on the difference this money is making. The governors were recently involved in an external review of the school's work. They told me that this review helped them to further develop their skills as governors and it also enabled them to gain a greater understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development.
- The vast majority of parents are positive about all aspects of the school. Some of the parents that spoke with me were particularly appreciative of the school's homework club, the phonics parent surgery, and the opportunities they have to share their views about the school. Senior leaders have established a Parent Group. This group meet regularly to discuss the work of the school and to put forward ideas. The parents in this group organised the summer fayre last year and are now in the process of organising a multi-faith event so that they can celebrate different faiths and cultures represented in the school community.
- A few parents raised concerns about teaching in one class and school dinners. You are aware of these concerns. You are continuing to take

appropriate action to strengthen teaching. You have set up a 'School nutrition action group', to review school dinners. This group comprises pupils, parents, and kitchen staff.

- All the staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were positive about the school. One wrote: 'Holy Family is a lovely school we are a "team" – a "family" where we are very supportive of each other.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers provide activities that are suitable for pupils of different abilities
- following any checks on teaching, senior leaders identify the exact actions that teachers should take to raise pupils' achievement, and that all senior leaders make clear when they will check that these actions have been implemented
- the processes for collecting information about teaching, pupils' achievement and additional funding are simplified so that governors are able to check rigorously the impact of the actions taken by senior leaders and are able to report more precisely to parents on the impact of additional funding on pupils.

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 Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors. I also met with a representative from Birmingham Education Partnership and the Archdiocese of Birmingham. I spoke informally with parents at the start and end of the school day and with pupils throughout the school day. You joined me on brief visits to all classes. We talked to pupils about their learning and reviewed some pupils' writing, mathematics and topic work. I took account of the 23 responses on Parent View by the end of the inspection and the 14 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire. I reviewed a range of documentation including minutes of governing body meetings, the school's own evaluation of its performance, the most recent information about pupils' progress and documents related to keeping pupils safe.