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Mrs Clare Dickinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dickinson

Short inspection of The Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 March 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that pupils are kept safe and looked after effectively, especially those with particular additional needs. Key pastoral staff know families well and ensure that staff are vigilant in looking out for any particular incidents. There is a large well-trained team of designated safeguarding leads at a senior level to ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is the school's main priority. All staff are regularly kept up to date with training and guidance. Pupils reported that they felt safe in school. They said that the school prepares them well to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. They all said they would report any worries they had to a responsible adult. Pupils reported that bullying was very rare and that behaviour was good in the classroom.

There were some gaps identified in the administration and recording of safeguarding documents which were rectified during the inspection. All appropriate checks on staff and visitors had already been carried out thoroughly, however. Leaders and governors have not checked with enough rigour that safeguarding records are maintained and up to date.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have been slow to respond to issues identified at the last inspection; in particular, standards in writing, outcomes for most-able pupils, and checking on improvements for different groups of pupils. The school is currently experiencing financial challenges which have led to a cutback in support staff. A minority of the small number of parents and carers responding to the Parent View free-text service expressed concerns about the impact of these cuts.
- Following the last inspection, outcomes in writing at the end of key stage 2 declined. In 2016, the progress of pupils in writing from Year 2 to Year 6 was very low compared to the national average. Outcomes improved in 2017, although progress was still below average in writing, as well as in mathematics. Progress in reading was above average. Standards overall in reading, writing and mathematics were close to the national average in key stages 1 and 2 in 2017. Outcomes for pupils currently in school are improving but not at a fast enough rate. This is because of the variability in the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2. Pupils get off to a very good start in the early years from their typically well below average starting points. After Reception, the rate of pupil progress slows down but then accelerates again by the end of key stage 2.
- There remains some variability in the outcomes for different groups of pupils. The small number of most-able pupils did not do well in the most recent assessments and tests at the end of key stages 1 and 2 compared to their peers nationally. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those whose first language is English did not make as much progress as other pupils nationally. Analysis of pupil groups currently in school by leaders at all levels, including middle leaders, is still at an early stage of development. Leaders and governors have not fully ensured that the use of pupil premium and SEN funding has had enough impact on pupil outcomes. Work in pupils' books and outcomes from assessments for pupils currently in the school are showing signs of improvements for these groups of pupils, however.
- The extent to which teaching engages pupils from their different starting points is variable. Teaching is very strong, including in the early years, where children are fully engaged in their learning, are well supported by additional adults and have suitably challenging tasks. In a key stage 2 mathematics lesson on percentages, for example, all pupils were set challenging work, building appropriately on their previous learning. Elsewhere, teaching is less strong where it is aimed towards the middle or, in a few instances, where pupils are not well supported or provided with suitably matched tasks. Some pupils switch off if they find the work too hard or too easy.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the website is up to date and that all the statutory information required by the Department for Education (DfE) is published. Too many of the links on the website do not work and a number of the published policies are not the most recent ones ratified by the governing body.
- Leaders and governors have maintained the strong ethos in the school of respect and tolerance for all. They have ensured that pupils have enhanced opportunities

to take on responsibilities and gain wider experiences, for example through free musical experiences for all and the chess club. Children's very good behaviour for learning is established straight away in the early years and this is maintained by the very large majority of pupils throughout the school. In one example seen, a child in Reception was leading children's learning on tally charts by modelling from the front of the class. The majority of the small number of parents expressing views through the Parent View free-text service said their children were happy in school. They welcomed the community spirit fostered by leaders. The very large majority of staff responding to the survey said they were proud to work in the school. All agreed that safeguarding, pupil behaviour and the support they receive from senior leaders were strengths of the school. All said they enjoy working in the school.

- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching well and have had an impact on improving or removing teaching which was previously identified by them as inadequate. They are continuing to provide effective support for teachers in year groups where teaching is not yet good. Leadership in the early years is highly effective. Recent appointments to the governing body have enhanced its expertise in finance and education. This enables governors to challenge leaders more rigorously in these aspects.
- Outcomes for pupils in reading are strong and improving. Progress, which was below average from key stage 1 to 2 in 2016, improved to be above average in 2017. Outcomes in phonics in Year 1 are consistently above average. The proportion of pupils achieving at least the expected standard in writing by the end of key stage 1 in 2017 was also above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes improve for pupils in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2, especially for most-able pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils, and pupils whose first language is English
- teaching is at least consistently good in key stages 1 and 2 to match that of the very best in the school
- leaders at all levels, including middle leaders and governors, analyse outcomes rigorously for different groups of pupils currently in the school to ensure that additional funding for specific groups is leading to improved outcomes
- the website meets the DfE's statutory requirements
- leaders and governors are more rigorous in checking the administration of safeguarding records.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders and other teaching staff. I also met with six members of the governing body, including the newly appointed chair and two former chairs. I spoke by telephone to the school's improvement partner and a representative from the Birmingham Education Partnership.

I carried out seven lesson observations jointly with you, which included scrutinising pupils' books and talking to pupils.

I observed pupils' behaviour around the school. I spoke to a group of pupils from Reception to Year 6.

I took account of 10 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, 10 responses to the Parent View free-text service and an email from a parent. I also reviewed 18 responses to the staff survey. There were too few responses to the pupil survey to take account of.

The key trails for this inspection were: the impact of leadership and management on outcomes over time; outcomes for different groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, including most-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities; the leadership of SEN; the deployment of pupil premium funding; and safeguarding.

I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, pupil performance information, behaviour and attendance information, several school policy documents, and safeguarding and child protection records. I also checked the school's website.