

1 July 2019

Mr Ben Lavin  
Executive Headteacher  
St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School  
Beacon Road  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire  
BD6 3DQ

Dear Mr Lavin

### **Short inspection of St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 June 2019, 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 your predecessor 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 converted to become an academy in October 2016 and is part of the Blessed Christopher Wharton Academy Trust. You have recently been appointed as the executive headteacher, leading both St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School and St Winefride's Catholic Primary School, bringing two schools in the same parish under the same leadership. You bring with you a clear vision of how you will lead the next stage of the school's development.

The previous long-serving headteacher retired in December 2018. The trust, supported by the diocese, secured an interim headteacher who is remaining in the role of head of school now that you have taken up your post. This has helped to provide continuity to senior leadership.

Members of the local academy board know the school well and can explain the current improvement priorities. In discussions, they acknowledged that there is a need to further clarify the relationship between their work and that of the trust. The trust plans to develop further capacity for school improvement as it grows.

Most parents and carers are positive about the school. In the online survey, one described the school as 'a loving caring school'. Another said, 'St John's has helped to form our children into healthy, happy and confident individuals.' The staff I spoke to were all positive about the school, particularly middle leaders and support staff.

The interim headteacher has refined school improvement priorities effectively to

focus on teaching, learning and improving pupils' outcomes. The quality of education in the school remains good and the end-of-key-stage results since the last inspection and current pupils' work demonstrate this.

### **Safeguarding is effective**

A culture of safeguarding is established. The designated safeguarding leader and her deputy are both well trained and committed to their work. A full training programme for staff is provided, but, most importantly, staff are confident about asking for advice and ensuring that any information is passed on quickly. Record keeping is thorough and all the appropriate employment checks are made and recorded as required in a central record. The local academy board commissioned a full audit of safeguarding which gives them assurance of the effect of leaders' work in this crucial area of the school's work.

At our first meeting, you identified the behaviour and personal development of pupils as a real strength of the school. This was very clear throughout the inspection. Pupils are courteous. Behaviour in lessons and at social times is very good. This gives a strong foundation to build upon in developing teaching and learning further.

The pupils I spoke to said that they feel safe at school. They know that they can take any problem they are having to staff, and they have confidence that they will receive support. When pupils do misbehave, they say that it is dealt with swiftly and fairly by staff. Pupils value the rewards that they receive to encourage good behaviour, as well as in recognition of other achievements. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive and are proud to be a part of this inclusive, happy school community with its Christian ethos. They enjoy coming to school, which you identified as a strength of the school. Rates of attendance are above national averages. Most pupils want to come to school. The school also has good procedures, following up swiftly if pupils do not attend.

### **Inspection findings**

- Writing, spelling and mathematics are prioritised in the school's development plan. Leaders have recently analysed pupils' writing more carefully to identify areas where pupils need to improve. The success of this work is clear in pupils' work and was confirmed by the results of the recent moderation of Year 6 pupils' writing.
- Pupils spell well. This was seen in their written work and confirmed by the results in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test at the end of key stage 2: in both 2017 and 2018, pupils achieved well above the national average. The success of this work has led to you sharing your approach with other schools.
- In mathematics, a new scheme has been adopted. Work in exercise books shows good coverage of mathematical content. Work is well set out. When looking at books with the middle leader responsible for mathematics, she was able to identify the improvements that had been made because of recent training for teachers. However, while there is a growing emphasis on pupils being asked to

explain their answers and reasoning, there is still more to do to develop this area so that pupils can apply their mathematical knowledge to different contexts and acquire greater depth and reach higher standards.

- Older pupils are confident in their knowledge of multiplication tables, but when given more complex mental arithmetic problems, they rely too much on simple techniques rather than looking for relationships between numbers or methods.
- Last year, there was a considerable improvement in reading results at the end of key stage 2, with 35% of pupils reaching the higher standard. Outcomes at key stage 1 have not improved in the same way, although they remain in line with national averages. You spoke about your ideas to take this forward. The pupils I listened to read did so at a standard in line with the assessment provided by their teachers. This shows an accurate understanding of what each pupil knows and what they need to be taught next. One girl spoke about how she had made rapid progress in reading in Year 3. Older children are very positive about the app they use to monitor their wider reading.
- Your plans have prioritised the work of middle leaders. Middle leaders feel very well supported and value not only the training that they have received, but also the opportunity to provide effective training for their colleagues, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Children in Reception make good progress. There is a wide range of activities that the children enjoy, which includes sufficient time for children to develop their knowledge and to practise reading, writing and number skills. They are well prepared to make the transition to key stage 1.
- There is a good range of topics covered in the foundation subjects. Parents are informed of the work that pupils are completing with a half-termly newsletter. You have identified that you would like to give the curriculum greater coherence going forward, so that where possible, there are clearer links between the topics being studied.
- Looking at books in history and geography with middle leaders, it is clear that pupils' work is not as strong as it is in English and mathematics. Pupils retain the knowledge they have been taught well in English and mathematics, but less well in foundation subjects. For instance, in geography in Year 6, when pupils were using atlases, very few could identify lines of longitude and latitude and even fewer could explain them. This was despite the fact that this had been taught earlier in the year, which the pupils acknowledged.
- The interim headteacher, supported by an executive headteacher of the trust, has recently acted to improve how pupil premium funding is allocated and monitored. Barriers to learning are identified and resources are targeted appropriately. However, because there has not been a proper analysis of the additional funding in previous years, members of the local board and trustees are unaware of its effect on pupils' progress.
- Older pupils have many opportunities to take on positions of responsibility and these help them to develop independence. Pupils are very positive about these roles. Year 5 pupils act as buddies for key stage 1 pupils, sitting with them at lunchtime and playing with them at some breaktimes. Year 6 pupils can take on

specific roles such as those of prefect or even head boy or head girl. In the wider community, the Mini Vinnies scheme (named after St Vincent) encourages pupils to get involved in fund-raising and other work, such as arranging a coffee morning for elderly members of the parish. This supports their personal development, which you correctly identify as a strength of the school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue to develop:

- the capacity of governance at both local and trust level, clarifying delegated roles and responsibilities and ensuring that there is effective monitoring of pupil premium expenditure
- the strategies to improve pupils' progress in mathematics, so that more pupils achieve at greater depth at key stage 1 and higher standards at key stage 2.
- the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics, particularly in science, history and geography, so that pupils retain more of the knowledge that they are taught.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local academy board, chair of the board of trustees of the Blessed Christopher Wharton Multi-Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cummings  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school and other leaders to evaluate the strengths and areas for development across the school. With the head of school, I visited all classes in the school, with you joining us for four of these observations. I discussed these observations with you and the head of school. I reviewed a wide range of work in pupils' books, particularly in mathematics, English, history and geography. I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, about their learning and experiences of school. I listened to a group of pupils read.

I read and scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school self-evaluation document and the school's improvement plan. I spoke to the chair and vice-chair of the local academy board and to representatives of the trust and

the diocese. I also scrutinised documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and child protection. I spoke to parents and staff. I considered the one response to Ofsted's staff survey and the 10 responses to Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil survey.