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Mr Andrew Monaghan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Monaghan

Short inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Chaddesden, Derby

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment as headteacher in September 2016, you have worked closely with your two deputy headteachers to raise expectations and aspirations among staff, pupils, parents and carers, and governors.

Your school has a strong sense of community. Everybody that I spoke with during the inspection is proud to be a part of your school 'family'. The school's values and inclusive culture ensure that your staff encourage every child to flourish. An overwhelming majority of the pupils enjoy school. All staff who responded to their survey feel motivated and supported. Parents who I spoke with think very highly of the school and value being able to talk so easily to its leaders. Of the many parents who responded to their survey, 99% said that they would recommend the school. One parent simply said that the school is 'brilliant'.

You and senior leaders know the school's many strengths, as well as those areas that still need improving. You have taken decisive actions to ensure that the overall outcomes for pupils are consistently good. These actions have had a positive impact, particularly more recently on outcomes in mathematics.

You have developed new leadership roles to share teaching and learning responsibilities among your staff. The early years leader now oversees the Nursery

and Reception classes. Relationships between the adults and children are positive. Children are enthusiastic about learning phonics. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to develop children's knowledge of letters and sounds. Adults reinforce children's learning through engaging activities. For example, when learning about the letter 'W', outdoor activities allow children to practise forming and writing the letter with twigs and chalk. Children's books show that they are making good progress, moving quickly from simple mark-making to writing individual letters and words. Teachers use an online journal so that parents know how well their children are progressing. Children are prepared well for Year 1.

Pupils take pride in their work. A focus by teachers on pupils' handwriting and presentation skills in all lessons is having a positive impact on their writing outcomes. We agreed that improving pupils' achievements in writing should have taken place more quickly after the last inspection, particularly in key stage 1. Middle leaders have now developed a more consistent approach to teaching writing in all lessons. Teachers use information about pupils' progress to ensure that learning is matched more closely to pupils' needs and abilities. In a Year 4 English lesson, I saw the most able pupils taking responsibility for improving their writing. These pupils used the 'grammar garden' and the writing skills displayed in all classrooms to improve their work. I also watched Year 6 pupils offering perceptive responses to questions asked by the teacher, before completing a writing task. Year 6 pupils who I spoke with said that they feel challenged in their learning. Teachers provide focused feedback on how pupils can improve their written work. In examples of books from key stages 1 and 2, pupils respond to this advice, and the depth of their writing is improving.

Pupils are courteous and respectful towards others, and their behaviour in class is exemplary. They are enthusiastic about their school and feel that they have adults they can talk to. Pupils know that adults value their opinions. For example, pupils worked with teachers to agree the 'golden skills'. Leaders use these skills each week to celebrate individual pupils' successes. Pupils like opportunities to take on leadership roles. They also enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and each other reflect the school's values. In your care, the pupils thrive.

The governors understand their role and carry it out very well, striking the right balance between challenge and support. They are ambitious for the school and have a broad range of skills. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and understand how well it is performing. The chair of the governing body visits the school often to see the work that leaders are doing. Other governors meet with subject leaders regularly to support their work. However, the governing body does not hold you to account well enough for the allocation and monitoring of the pupil premium funding. Too few disadvantaged pupils are achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Disadvantaged pupils do not attend as well as other pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. You have systems in place to make sure that no one can come into school without permission. You and the school business manager ensure that all checks are in place before an adult starts working or volunteering at the school. Safeguarding records are well organised and fit for purpose.

Staff and governors are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance. They receive regular training, including training relating to protecting pupils from extremism and radicalisation. Staff know that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and know what actions to take when necessary. You are vigilant, and any pupils or families who need help from outside agencies receive close support.

Pupils feel safe in school and know how to stay safe online, for example through workshops from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Pupils I spoke with are confident about what they would do if someone they do not know contacts them online. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens within school and, when it does, staff are good at dealing with it. Pupils' overall attendance is above the national average. You have clear strategies in place to support any pupils who are absent more frequently.

Inspection findings

- In the early years, expectations of children are high and they make strong progress. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development has been higher than the national average for the last three years.
- The systematic teaching of phonics means that children use their new skills to blend and read simple words. Pupils' attainment in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been above the national average for the last three years.
- To assess the learning of all your pupils, you have introduced a new system to track their progress. Teachers use this information well to plan for pupils' next steps in learning, and target any gaps. Teachers make sure that pupils know what they have to do to improve their work further. Leaders meet with teachers to track the progress that pupils are making. Pupils who are not making enough progress receive more support. As a result, more pupils are making the progress that they should.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 who reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average. You have identified that too few key stage 1 pupils achieved a higher standard in reading or writing. The proportion of key stage 2 pupils who achieved a higher standard in reading, writing and English grammar, spelling and punctuation increased to be above the national average. Fewer boys than girls achieve a higher standard in reading and writing in key stages 1 and 2.
- The actions you have taken to improve writing have been successful. Teachers have introduced topics in English that are more interesting to boys. Teachers

encourage pupils to write in more detail, using different strategies such as 'talk it, write it, improve it'. Teachers have taken part in writing training and compare good examples of pupils' written work. To encourage parents to read with their children, teachers have shared a list of appropriate reading books. Pupils' assessment information and their books show that the quality and depth of pupils' writing is improving for both boys and girls.

- The most able pupils complete tasks that are more challenging. For example, key stage 1 pupils are able to choose activities in English that become increasingly difficult. Pupils are keen to achieve at the highest level of 'platinum'. Pupils use 'knowledge organisers' in geography, history, religious education and science to give them the confidence to write in more detail. In mathematics, pupils complete problem-solving challenges that need them to use their mathematical understanding. The school's most recent information on pupils' progress suggests that more pupils are beginning to achieve at a higher standard.
- Fewer disadvantaged pupils attain as well as other pupils at the higher standards for reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils do not attend as well as other pupils. Leaders have not been precise enough with the allocation of pupil premium funding or checked that interventions and support for disadvantaged pupils are working. You have now put in place a new system to identify disadvantaged pupils who are not making enough progress and provide them with more support. Early signs suggest that disadvantaged pupils are beginning to achieve more often at a higher standard, in line with other pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are a key priority on your school improvement plan.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is allocated and monitored closely by leaders, so that attainment and attendance for this group of pupils increase to be at least in line with the national average
- they increase the proportion of all pupils who achieve at the higher standard in writing and reading at the end of key stage 1, through teaching that provides challenge to all pupils, particularly the most able.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Nottingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derby. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, two senior leaders and three middle-level leaders of English and early years. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited eight classes with you, including the indoor and outdoor areas for the early years classes. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and during lessons and I spoke with a group of pupils. I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks with you and your senior leaders. I met a number of parents informally at the beginning of the school day and I took into account the 157 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the 58 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.

I evaluated a range of information, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, documents relating to safeguarding, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's use of pupil premium, and information relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour, as well as a selection of school policies.