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Mrs Anne Weir  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Weir

### **Short inspection of St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2017, 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 October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection, and has ensured that the school continues to improve. The school's mission statement states: 'We strive to develop happy, fulfilled, well-educated, caring and confident children.' The hard work of leaders and staff goes a long way to ensuring that these ambitions are realised. Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school and the large majority of parents who responded to the 'Parent View' survey said that their children were happy at St Wilfrid's.

Pupils are cheerful, well-mannered and welcoming to visitors. They behave sensibly around school and on the playground. In lessons, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning by listening carefully, settling quickly to their work and responding well to teachers' instructions. Pupils have a good understanding of core British values, such as the importance of showing respect for other people's ideas and beliefs. They also show a real awareness of the challenges faced by people in less fortunate positions than themselves, and regularly take part in fundraising activities for different charities.

The school's curriculum is broad and well balanced, and is positively enriched by school trips and extra-curricular clubs. Pupils talk happily about the wide range of different subjects and topics that they have covered. They particularly enjoy practical aspects of learning, such as extended creative arts projects and learning outside in their 'forest school' area. Pupils were also keen to tell me about

residential visits that they had been on, and how they had been able to take part in exciting activities such as canoeing on Ullswater.

You have been successful in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check has risen markedly to be in line with the average nationally. Readers in key stage 1 use their phonic knowledge confidently to tackle unfamiliar words. You have also overseen a significant overhaul of the school's assessment systems which are now providing teachers with more helpful, accurate information about pupils' attainment and progress. This is being used effectively to target pupils' learning needs, and consequently good provision is now made for supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is honest and accurate, and you are well aware that further improvements are required. Pupils' achievement in writing in key stage 2 has been stubbornly below national average for some time, but a decline in results in other areas in 2016 proved to be a catalyst for leaders to take decisive action. Your work has been successful in getting standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6 back on track, and provisional data for 2017 shows that attainment has risen to be in line with other schools nationally. Clear improvements can also be seen in the latest provisional data for reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1, as well as in phonics, and this confirms the positive overall impact that leaders are having on outcomes for pupils. There is, though, still scope for significant improvement in pupils' writing in key stage 2, and this is rightly given the highest priority in your school development planning.

At the time of the inspection there were 36 children in the one Reception class in school, and so the school was in breach of statutory requirements regarding infant class size. Fewer than 30 pupils were initially allocated a place in the school at the normal allocation time, but this number rose and was further increased by late arrivals in September. Governors are aware of their obligations regarding infant class size, but took the decision to keep just one class but with a higher-than-normal ratio of adults to children so that all of the children were able to fully access the early years curriculum. They do not plan for this to be a long-term solution as the children move into key stage 1. Evidence gathered on inspection showed that this decision has not had any negative impact on the quality of education that children currently in Reception class are receiving.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that detailed, high-quality records are maintained. They make sure that rigorous checks are made to ensure that staff, governors and regular visitors to school are suitable people to work with children. Staff and governors also receive regular training and updates about best practice in safeguarding. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of potential warning signs that may indicate a child is at risk of harm, and know what to do if they do have any such worries. Leaders follow up these

concerns promptly and have ensured that good support is available for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Leaders have successfully tackled issues caused by the school being situated on a busy campus with two other schools. A change to the times of the school day has improved traffic flow, and staff in brightly coloured tops are on hand to help pupils get into and out of school safely. Older pupils also play their part, acting as 'safety officers' to help ensure that younger pupils are safe and well looked after. This is typical of the school's successful approach to safeguarding, which also includes work to promote internet safety and a clear anti-bullying message.

## **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to evaluate how effectively leaders were addressing the issues with writing attainment and progress in key stage 2, and what impact their actions were having. It is clear that leaders were galvanised into action by the results of national assessments in 2016, and recognised that previous strategies aimed at improving standards in writing had stalled. An initial attempt to improve standards through increasing staffing ratios met with little success, and leaders and governors bravely decided to re-evaluate the situation and try another approach. There are signs that this is having a positive impact, and outcomes in writing for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 last year were stronger. This is because teachers' subject knowledge has been strengthened and they now have a more consistent approach to teaching writing. Staff ensure that pupils are clear about what they need to do to make their writing better, and help them to broaden their vocabulary so that they can make more adventurous word choices to enhance their written work.
- You acknowledge that your work in this area is not yet complete. The improvements that have been made sadly came too late to have an impact on the performance of pupils in Year 6 in 2017. For those pupils currently in key stage 2, there is still scope to further accelerate their progress by ensuring that teachers provide them with more opportunities across the curriculum to practise and develop their writing. Teachers also need to ensure that their expectations of pupils' written work are consistently high, particularly for the most able pupils.
- The second key line of enquiry focused on the apparent decline in outcomes in key stage 1 in 2016. Provisional data for the most recent assessments in 2017 showed a marked improvement in outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics, which represented good progress from pupils' starting points at the end of Reception class. In particular, there was a significant rise in the proportion of pupils working at greater depth in these subjects. It was clear from the work in pupils' mathematics books and teachers' probing questioning around the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary that the most able pupils are now being challenged more effectively. This is a key factor in the improvements in outcomes.
- The third key line of enquiry looked at the effectiveness of provision in early years and how well boys' needs were being met. This is because there had historically been a substantial difference in the performance of boys and girls.

Strong leadership in early years had identified this issue, and a great deal of work has been done to ensure that the curriculum caters more effectively for boys' interests. The outdoor area is an inspiring hive of activity, with a wide range of attractive learning zones. I observed a large group of boys cooperating impressively with each other to build large structures using foam and plastic blocks and bricks, developing their language and problem-solving skills. Boys have also responded enthusiastically to activities that staff have planned with their interests in mind, such as a pirate-inspired theme. These improvements have not been in any way detrimental to girls' learning though, and boys and girls were observed working and playing well together both indoors and outside. The success of this work is confirmed by the provisional results at the end of Reception class in 2017. These show that attainment has risen to be above the national average, and that the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has been eliminated.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they accelerate the pace of improvements in pupils' achievement in writing in key stage 2 and make sure that pupils are given more opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills across different areas of the curriculum
- staff across key stage 2 have consistently high expectations of what pupils, particularly those who are most able, can achieve in their written work.

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

Neil Dixon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher and five members of the governing body, and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I also met a group of teaching and support staff and the leader responsible for early years. I considered 43 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I met with a group of pupils and heard a number of other pupils read. I visited classes in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2, and I looked at examples of pupils' work. I also looked at a range of documentation covering different aspects of the school's work.