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Mrs Suzanne Henry
Headteacher
Bishop Ellis Catholic Primary School
Barkby Thorpe Lane
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Dear Mrs Henry

Short inspection of Bishop Ellis Catholic Primary School, Thurmaston

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As a result of your well-established and effective procedures for inducting new staff, you have ably managed the considerable changes to staffing during this time. Senior and middle leaders have stepped up to new challenges and, as a result, all of those who responded to the staff questionnaire agree that the school is well led and managed. They all say that they are proud to be a member of staff at the school.

You and your leadership team have worked successfully to improve the quality of teaching. You have created a culture of development where staff receive regular feedback on their work. They welcome these 'Golden Nuggets' of guidance and act on suggestions as soon as possible. Teachers and other adults now use questioning more effectively to challenge pupils to think deeply about their work. The success of your actions was evident in the outcomes for Year 6 pupils in 2016. These pupils reached standards which were above those seen nationally and they made rapid progress from their starting points.

Together with governors, you have made sure that the strong ethos of the school – honesty, forgiveness and care – is at the heart of its work and this is welcomed by pupils and parents. As a result of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils have opportunities to learn about all faiths and cultures and talk about these with interest, recognising their importance. As one pupil said, 'If we were all the same, it

would be boring.'

You know the strengths and areas for improvement of the school very well and recognise that your next priority is to improve pupils' skills in spelling to support their writing. Spelling is being taught and practised in all classes but some pupils do not routinely apply this learning when they write independently. Pupils write fluently and at length in many subjects and teachers guide them on how to improve the quality of this writing. This feedback does not consistently allow pupils in all classes to see where they have made mistakes in their spelling and so learn from them.

You also recognise that the youngest children did not reach the standards that they should in 2016, with boys' writing being a particular weakness. The early years leader and her team have taken advice and established a plan to address this.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective and that records and information kept in school are detailed and fit for purpose. All staff have regular updates to their training on safeguarding and child protection so that they have the knowledge and skills necessary. They are vigilant and promptly report any concerns. These are then followed up rigorously.

As well as keeping pupils safe within school, staff make sure that pupils learn about dangers outside school. Pupils know about road safety risks and how to keep themselves safe when using computers or mobile devices. Recent training for parents at school has helped them to support their children with digital technologies. Pupils know what constitutes bullying and say that, although this does not happen often at school, they are confident that all staff, including lunchtime supervisors, will help them sort it out quickly when it does. Pupils take opportunities to help each other and their school in their roles as playground buddies, school councillors and eco warriors.

Inspection findings

- Teachers are committed to improving their teaching and welcome the regular guidance provided by leaders. They have used this and their good subject knowledge to plan interesting activities which engage and challenge pupils at all levels, including the most able.
- Teachers are well supported by leaders. The ethos of improvement has ensured that staff are ready for promotion both within the school and elsewhere, while also enabling the school to maintain its high expectations and standards of pupils' work, despite considerable changes in staffing.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons. They listen well to their teacher and to each other and are then able to discuss their ideas sensibly and confidently. They appreciate teachers' advice on how to improve their work and this is having a positive impact on their use of grammar and punctuation, but it is not consistently

effective in improving their spelling.

- Outcomes at the end of the Reception Year have fallen for the past two years and are now below the national average. How well the school was addressing this dip was one of the key lines of enquiry. Leaders have recognised that boys' writing is a particular weakness and have developed a clear set of actions for improvement. All children were seen to be actively engaged in their phonics sessions and were writing down the sounds they heard. Looking at pupils' workbooks and other examples of their writing, we saw that children do not have sufficient opportunity during the rest of the school day to reinforce and practise what they have just learned when they are writing independently.
- Another key line of enquiry for this inspection was to look at whether pupils in key stage 1 were making enough progress, particularly in mathematics. Visits to lessons, work in pupils' books and your assessment information show that these pupils, especially those in Year 2, are making good progress and most are well on track to meet the expected standard by the end of the year. A good proportion of pupils will reach the higher level, especially in reading.
- Pupils love to read and do so with fluency and expression. This reflects the school's effective teaching of the skills of reading and the promotion of its importance. Pupils read frequently at home and at school. Year 1 pupils who read with the inspector were able to apply their phonics knowledge and so tackle new and tricky words.
- Your actions are improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils and enabling more of them to reach the expected standard. The progress of this group of pupils was a key line of enquiry for the inspection. In the past, disadvantaged pupils have made progress which is broadly in line with that of other pupils nationally but below that of other pupils in the school. This year, as a result of a range of well-thought-through interventions, these pupils are making faster progress and your assessment information indicates that an increasing proportion in all year groups will meet the expected and higher standards.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use consistent and effective strategies to help pupils spell accurately and so improve their writing
- pupils, particularly boys, use the sounds they know more often in their independent writing so that more reach the expected standard and higher.

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 Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, other staff and a group of governors. I also met with a representative of the diocese. I gathered the views of parents as they dropped their children off at school and looked at the 66 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, including 59 more detailed written comments. I also scrutinised the 27 responses from staff who took part in Ofsted's staff survey. The views of pupils were gathered in the playground, from my meeting with a group of pupils from Years 2–6 and from the 98 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. You and your deputy headteacher joined me in visits to lessons and so I was able to find out about your strategies for improving teaching and learning. I listened to pupils read and carried out checks on safeguarding information, including talking to staff.