

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



1 March 2018

Mr Paul Ackers
Headteacher
St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy
Alvaston Street
Alvaston
Derby
Derbyshire
DE24 0PA

Dear Mr Ackers

Short inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 May 2014

This school continues to be good. The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You joined the school in January 2017. Since then, you and the leadership team have carefully evaluated the areas for development and have taken steps to bring about improvement. For example, you recognised that the early years needed developing and you appointed an experienced early years leader to improve provision.

In the last inspection report, you were asked to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work in all subjects, and for teachers to have high expectations of how pupils present their work. Teachers now give pupils next steps for improvement in English and mathematics. Pupils are responsible for checking their work to identify when they have met the target. They have good knowledge of their targets, and can explain what they need to do to achieve them. Pupils' workbooks show that this approach is used consistently across the school. Workbooks also show that teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation. There is a consistent approach to developing handwriting and pupils take pride in their work.

Leaders were also asked to ensure that newly appointed subject leaders contribute fully to improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subject. The leaders of English and mathematics are well established in their role and have a good understanding of the areas for development in their subject. They take an active role in monitoring standards in their subject. Due to changes in staffing, the leadership of other areas of the curriculum is less well developed. However, you

and the subject leaders are reorganising the curriculum to develop a learning challenge approach to improve the teaching of foundation subjects and science.

Teaching across the school is good. In mathematics, however, sometimes teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to apply their skills to problem-solving and reasoning. Occasionally teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, and teachers do not use their knowledge of what pupils already know to carefully develop learning.

Staff are positive about the school and the support they receive. They are keen to do what they can to raise the aspirations of pupils and want to challenge them to achieve more. Due to this focus, the outcomes for pupils improved in reading and mathematics at key stage 1 and 2 in 2017.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They say that staff are supportive of pupils and families and that the staff are very approachable. If they have any concerns, the leaders deal with these well. Several parents commented on the high-quality support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Parents believe that their children are well looked after and they make good progress at the school.

Pupils I spoke with said that there is always someone available to talk to if they have a concern. Pupils value the many different opportunities that they have available. They enjoy the residential visits where they can challenge themselves to try things they have not done before, and push themselves further. The many extra-curricular clubs on offer are appreciated by pupils. These include gymnastics, dance, drama, handball and tag rugby. They know they have done a good job in school because adults praise them and give them special rewards, including having 'Fluffy the bear' to take home with them. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online, including when using social media and online games. One pupil said online safety was about 'knowing the correct choices to make'.

Pupils' behaviour is good. Conduct around the school is well mannered and pupils are polite and keen to talk to adults about their learning. Pupils behave well on the playground, and are keen to develop their learning outside the classroom. For example, a group of pupils at breaktime were collecting snow and packing it around a water bottle to see if they could freeze the water.

The school's directors are committed to raising the aspirations of pupils and families. They have a good understanding of the school's areas for development, and work closely with leaders to make changes to improve pupils' outcomes. The directors are reflective about improvements and are keen for the school to improve further. The online information system ensures that all directors are up to date with current information. The directors use this information well to hold leaders to account. Leaders and directors have been quick to seek support from external consultants in order to develop the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The safeguarding team includes senior leaders, the inclusion leader and the leader for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This ensures that the safeguarding team has a comprehensive understanding of the needs of pupils. Records are well maintained and managed. Cases are discussed regularly to ensure that all relevant staff have the most up-to-date information about pupils and families.

The designated safeguarding leaders are tenacious in following up any safeguarding concerns they may have, with the local authority. Where cases do not meet the local authority thresholds for involvement, the team actively seeks support from other agencies. The team has a comprehensive understanding of different cases and carefully monitors the well-being of pupils who are at risk of harm.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have a good understanding of different safeguarding concerns. Staff know how to pass on any concerns they may have. Safeguarding issues are regularly covered through staff training. Leaders share scenarios with staff, and ask them to consider what they would do in different situations.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have ensured that the comprehensive tracking system is used thoroughly to monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Teachers use assessment information to target the progress that these pupils make, and support is put in place to meet pupils' needs. In 2017, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average. However, the school's own assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress when compared with the progress made in previous years.
- Leaders recognised the need to improve the quality of provision in the early years. A new early years leader was appointed in September 2017. The new leader has developed the provision in the early years to give a greater emphasis on children exploring and developing their own learning. The development of the outdoor area has enabled children to continue their learning outside.
- The early years leader has comprehensive tracking systems in place and has a secure understanding of the progress that children are making. The proportion of children achieving the good level of development this year is set to rise, with a higher proportion of children expected to exceed the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years. Occasionally adults' expectations of what children can achieve can be too low. Sometimes tasks are limited and do not provide children with opportunities to develop their learning.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers have a secure understanding of assessment information and leaders use this to hold teachers to account. Sometimes

teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, and most-able pupils are not challenged enough. As a result, some most-able pupils are not making as much progress as they are capable of. Leaders have recognised this and have introduced a challenge for pupils. However, this is not used consistently across all classes and sometimes the challenge set is limited and does not extend learning well enough.

- The teaching of mathematics develops pupils' ability to calculate mathematical problems using the four operations well. However, as pupils are taught to develop these skills in a systematic way, some pupils do not have a secure grasp of what they are doing. Teachers are not providing pupils with enough opportunities to develop their skills of reasoning and problem-solving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can do and set tasks that challenge pupils and accelerate progress
- the teaching of mathematics is developed to provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their skills to problem-solving and reasoning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees the Director of Education for the Archdiocese 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

Helen Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I held a meeting with the chair of the board of directors and one director. I spoke with the school's business manager, the assistant headteacher and teaching assistants. I met formally with seven pupils. You and I observed learning taking place during the morning, including English and mathematics, and learning in the early years.

I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks. I examined a range of the school's documentation, including its self-evaluation document, its improvement plan, assessment information, the behaviour incidents log and documents relating to safeguarding. I considered the views of parents by speaking with some of them before school. I also analysed the 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I considered the seven responses to Ofsted's survey of staff.