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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Louise Mohacsi
Headteacher
St Nicholas CofE Primary School
Priory Road
Kenilworth
Warwickshire
CV8 2PE

Dear Mrs Mohacsi

Short inspection of St Nicholas CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 January 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the last inspection the deputy headteacher has acquired a headship and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2017. The early years/key stage 1 leader left for promotion at the end of the last academic year and an interim arrangement has been made to cover these responsibilities. The leader for mathematics is currently on maternity leave. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in January 2017.

You and your deputy headteacher are a strong team. You are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Your self-evaluation and improvement plans are incisive and robust. You are reflective and forward thinking so that the school continues to improve. You ensure that staff provide pupils with rich and purposeful learning experiences. Pupils develop basic skills within a holistic cross-curricular approach to learning. The pastoral support for pupils is a high priority and you and your staff consider carefully how to meet the needs of every child. You know your pupils well.

Together with class teachers, you and the deputy headteacher monitor the progress and attainment of pupils carefully so that pupils do not fall behind. Assessment information is shared and owned extensively by all staff. Teachers' class plans include details of appropriate interventions and you check the effectiveness of these on pupils' progress. Current assessment information and work in pupils' books show

that pupils are making good progress.

Leaders have addressed the areas identified for improvement from the last report successfully. The leaders of literacy and mathematics have received extensive training so that they now check the progress and attainment of pupils closely. Following an analysis of pupils' outcomes in mathematics, for example, leaders further developed the teaching of calculations. As a result, progress in mathematics improved and pupils, especially girls, developed greater confidence. Leaders have recently introduced an action research project to support disadvantaged girls in mathematics. The literacy leader has worked with Year 2 teachers to improve writing outcomes for boys because their progress and attainment was not as strong as the progress and attainment of girls. They have focused on improving writing outcomes for middle-ability pupils. These middle leaders have developed their leadership skills significantly. They are now much more engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and outcomes, supporting staff in planning and teaching, providing information to parents and carers and reporting to governors.

Governors have an equally accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have established a monitoring cycle linked to the school improvement plan so that they can monitor the impact of leaders' actions effectively. They fulfil their statutory duties for safeguarding. They are clear about the use and impact of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the physical education and sports premium. Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors are both supportive and challenging. They interrogate pupils' outcomes and hold leaders to account effectively. In recent years, the governing body has developed so that they now have a good balance of skills and expertise.

Pupils are exceptionally well behaved. They are confident, polite and friendly. They work hard in lessons and focus on their learning. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and take a pride in their work. They are keen to improve their work and do the best that they can. Pupils enjoy school and value especially the enrichment programme of activities available to them. Pupils are proud to take on roles of responsibility such as play leaders, house captains and digital leaders.

Most parents hold very positive views about the school. Parents say their children are happy, make good progress, are safe and well looked after. They value your strong leadership and the rich curriculum and enrichment opportunities you provide. A very small number of parents said that their children were not challenged or supported well enough and bullying issues were not addressed. These views were not shared by the vast majority of parents or the findings during the inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and staff are vigilant in their approach to keeping pupils as safe as possible. Leaders are forward thinking and are mindful of local issues and the changing landscape in society. They train staff well so that

pupils learn about current risks, such as digital safety, effectively. The procedures for the safe recruitment of staff are thorough and well-managed. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding and have a good understanding of their responsibilities. They recognise that even the smallest concerns should be reported and are clear about the policies and procedures for reporting them.

Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of digital safety. Digital leaders help to teach other pupils about online safety through assemblies and displays. They know, for example, that it is not safe to open emails from people that you do not know because they might be malicious. Pupils have strong relationships with adults and are confident to share any concerns or worries with them.

Inspection findings

- Although pupils' progress in writing has been below the national average for the past two years, it is improving. Attainment has also improved and is now currently in line with the national average. Writing is a school priority and leaders have taken positive action to further improve outcomes. Leaders have implemented clear action plans and have provided staff training. Pupils are well supported to make good progress. Learning is well structured. Pupils edit their work and improve their writing by choosing more adventurous vocabulary. Pupils' work is neat and well presented. Pupils' work shows a range of writing across all subjects. Teachers have the same high expectations for writing in other subjects as they do in literacy. Pupils have a purpose for writing and they are motivated through well-chosen stimuli. For example, following a visit to the Somme, Year 6 pupils wrote emotive letters to the Unknown Soldier; at Christmas Year 1 pupils wrote letters to Year 5 pupils, who replied on behalf of Santa; and Year 4 wrote letters to the community, thanking people such as nurses for working over Christmas. As a result, pupils write well and some pupils produce high-quality pieces of writing. Leaders have introduced effective strategies to improve spelling. However, these are not yet embedded or used consistently.
- Leaders have a clear rationale that underpins their approach to the curriculum. They consider carefully what would motivate and inspire each cohort of pupils to generate wonder and interest around the objectives that must be taught as part of the national curriculum. Pupils experience a broad and rich curriculum relevant to their needs. The school's pastoral enrichment programme is securely embedded and provides pupils with exciting and interesting opportunities for their holistic development. Pupils take part in a broad range of activities such as skiing, cooking, croquet, trampolining, archery, fencing, squash, tennis, tri-golf, athletics, music, arts and textiles. Support staff and volunteers use their expertise to offer a range of experiences to all pupils. These are planned and reviewed regularly to ensure that opportunities are rich, inclusive and varied. This week, for example, leaders launched the marathon, where, in stages, all pupils run or walk a marathon by the end of the year.
- In the past, the number of exclusions has appeared high. However, some absences recorded as exclusions were as a result of a clerical error. Leaders have a clear and effective behaviour policy. This is used consistently across school and behaviour is managed well. In the past year, leaders have introduced a new

online behaviour system that is now embedded and having a positive effect. Behaviour incidents are closely tracked and evidence shows that the number of recorded incidents has reduced. Leaders are currently developing learning behaviours for pupils and 'tips for success'. Pupils now use the language of learning, such as resilience, to help them become better learners. The pastoral support for pupils is a strength. Pupils receive effective support when they need it. For example, staff are trained in various programmes and therapies, such as a nurture approach, to help pupils develop an understanding of their emotions. Leaders employ a counsellor to help pupils develop self-esteem and resilience. Leaders ensure that pupils' transition to secondary school is effective so that vulnerable pupils continue to be supported.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the effective strategies to improve spelling are embedded securely and applied consistently in all classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I met with the chair and members of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the 80 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the 53 written responses and two letters. I also considered the 24 responses to the staff survey and the 100 responses to the pupil survey. I spoke to pupils formally about the curriculum, and informally during the day. I reviewed, with pupils, the work in their books and work displayed around the school. I scrutinised a range of school documents, including the single central record, safeguarding records, behaviour logs, the school's self-evaluation document and school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, curriculum plans and assessment information. I visited all classes with you and school leaders and looked at pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour throughout the day, in lessons and on the playground.