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Dear Mrs Evans

Short inspection of St Gildas Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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. Throughout your time as headteacher you have maintained St Gildas as a caring school that is particularly experienced in providing for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The Catholic and family ethos is very evident within the school. It underpins all you and your staff do to support parents and engage them with their children's learning. This is an inclusive, family-orientated school that values your strong, pastoral leadership. British values are woven seamlessly into the school's curriculum. High-quality art work and writing examples that are displayed throughout the school reflect the school's Catholic nature and values.

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant staffing changes. However, you have successfully steered the school through this challenging time and managed the necessary changes well. In the past year, stable staffing and effective professional development have allowed you to address more effectively the academic challenges facing the school. Prior to this, other school priorities, such as improving pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills, were overshadowed, and this led to a disappointing dip in standards, reflected in the Key Stage 1 2016 end of year assessments. Staffing is now stable, teaching is typically good throughout the school and pupils are making better progress in lessons as you and your staff are once more focusing on providing pupils with a good-quality all-round education.

The arrangements for tracking the learning and progress of pupils are embedded throughout the school. The information this generates provides you and your staff and governors with accurate information about pupils' progress in learning. You are confident, as a result of consistently good teaching, that almost all pupils are now making good progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematics skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are safe in the school. Staff know the needs of pupils and their families well. They are vigilant in spotting any evidence that a child may not be thriving. A strong culture of safeguarding has been built around a secure knowledge of pupils' individual needs and any vulnerabilities they may demonstrate. You possess a very good knowledge of the pupils in your care whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable. The checks that are made on the staff's backgrounds and their suitability to work with children comply with legal requirements. Records show staff and governors are well informed, appropriately trained and regularly updated on changes in safeguarding legislation. The school takes appropriate action where necessary and works closely with external partners in order to help pupils to thrive, as well as to keep them safe. Parents who spoke with me, or submitted comments, agreed their children were safe and well cared for while at school. A typical comment written by a parent was, 'I am really satisfied with the school. It is a nurturing environment with happy and well behaved children. The teachers are great and really care about the children in their charge.' Another wrote, 'I am very grateful to the teaching staff for the professional and sensitive way they have accommodated the needs of our family.'

Inspection findings

- One of my key lines of enquiry in helping me to decide whether the school remained good was to find out how well the school had addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. To this end, I looked for evidence of how the checks you carry out on teachers' performance and the training they receive are helping more pupils make good progress in learning. I also looked for evidence of how well pupils are learning to write and for a range of audiences. A writing assignment called 'First of the Month', where pupils are asked to write on a theme at the start of each month, is proving to be a successful strategy. Celebrations of writing take place regularly within school.
- The ongoing training and development of staff is proving effective. Training ensures that all staff are equipped with the skills necessary to provide for the learning needs of pupils. Teachers use this information appropriately to help them plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Together we reviewed pupils' written work in their books and on display around the school. We found strong evidence that pupils are learning to write for a range of audiences and that handwriting is taught systematically throughout the school. Children in the early years and in key stage 1 practise their reading and writing skills daily.
- The school works effectively with pupils who have special educational needs

and/or disabilities and their families. You have established an efficient system to identify the learning needs of pupils new to the school. Teaching ensures that all pupils are provided with a range of activities that are suitably matched to their learning needs. You work closely with a wide range of educational partners and agencies in order to provide for the broad and often complex needs of pupils. For example, there is provision for autism support, occupational therapy, and speech and language support. You also work closely with children's social services to support your most vulnerable pupils. Furthermore, the school is being used as a showcase of best practice in supporting pupils who come from a minority ethnic background.

- Pupils' progress is carefully monitored. You regularly provide your staff and governors with a summary of pupils' progress. Leaders use assessment information effectively to identify exactly where pupils are in acquiring their mathematics and literacy skills. A larger than average number of pupils within the school have additional and often complex learning needs. Disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are all tracked as discrete groups. This allows you to accurately identify what needs to be done to support those pupils who might need to catch up or benefit from further challenge in order to achieve their best. The most able pupils make good progress. However, they are not currently tracked as closely as other key groups.
- The good-quality professional development staff are receiving this year is enabling them to better provide for the learning needs of pupils. For example, numeracy training for staff has resulted in many more pupils becoming fluent in problem solving. Already this year, you are able to identify that many more pupils are on track in mathematics to achieve their end of year targets compared to this time last year. Additional adult support is being provided for pupils currently in Year 3 in order to close any remaining gaps in knowledge identified by their end of Year 2 assessments.
- A further line of enquiry looked at how well governors are provided with sufficient, accurate and evaluative information regarding the work of the school. Governors confirmed to me that they benefit from having good communication links with you. You and your middle leaders keep governors regularly updated on the work of the school through face-to-face meetings and detailed written reports. Until more recently, governors have accepted too readily, and without in-depth scrutiny, the information provided for them in written reports. Governors now realise they need to be more proactive in holding the school to account and to be quicker to offer challenge. The governing body's ability to drive school improvement more effectively has been accurately identified as a priority for improvement. Governors have wisely committed to undertake an external review and take part in further training as necessary, in order to become more effective in fulfilling their duties.
- My final line of enquiry was about attendance. The school regularly monitors attendance data, including for key groups. Patterns are analysed and rigorously followed up. Historic, low attendance (due mainly to the persistent absence of a few pupils) continues to be rigorously addressed. Pastoral support provided by the school is appreciated by parents and proving to be

effective. Current attendance information shows an improvement on last year and an improving trend over the past three years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors demonstrate greater effectiveness in holding the school to account so that the pace of improvement is maintained.
- the monitoring of the most able pupils is carried out with the same rigour as it is for other groups of pupils in order to help them achieve the higher levels they are capable of making.

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

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met regularly with you as part of a professional dialogue. I also met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair. I held meetings with teachers and spoke informally with other members of staff. Together we undertook observations of learning in lessons. We spoke with pupils about their work and examined pupils' work, focusing on writing and presentation. Before the inspection, I examined a variety of documents, including the school's website, published performance information and a summary of its self-evaluation. I spoke with parents at different times throughout the day and also took into account 20 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 11 replies to the pupils' questionnaire and 10 responses to the staff survey.