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Paula Barningham
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Dear Mrs Barningham

Short inspection of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your leadership is passionate and effective. Arriving shortly after the previous inspection, you found weaknesses in provision. You set about tackling these with a clear vision for improving the outcomes for all pupils. Current staff share your vision. Most parents are highly supportive of the school and the changes you have made. For example, a parent told me: 'The school is very caring and well led by the headteacher. As a parent, you feel that from top to bottom there is cohesion and a focus on building socially conscious, caring children, as well as delivering positive and well-executed teaching.' Other parents, supported by governors and the local authority representative, highlighted the 'vast improvement' since your appointment and the 'excellent leadership skills which is reflected in the teaching and care provided at the school'.

It is apparent that you, leaders and governors, have made great strides in addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. There have been big improvements in the presentation of pupils' work, teachers use information about how well pupils are doing to set work that challenges them and most parents say that there is now regular, age-appropriate homework. You are currently working with equally passionate and expert subject leaders to make further improvements. Currently the impact of subject leadership has been limited by time available. You provide them with opportunities to have an input at staff meetings and give

feedback to colleagues through book monitoring. However, you recognise that there is some inconsistency in how well teachers implement the school's schemes for teaching different subjects. As a result, you are planning more opportunities for subject leaders to check the quality of how well subjects are taught.

Pupils' highly positive ethos and behaviour reported at the previous inspection has been maintained. Pupils get on well together and are kind to one another.

Safeguarding is effective.

Procedures for keeping pupils safe are secure. You and other leaders ensure that all safeguarding procedures are robust and fit for purpose. Pupils have a safe environment in which to learn. Your staff and the safeguarding governor are robust in their approach and diligent in keeping records and following procedures to ensure that the safety of pupils is maintained. Pupils told inspectors about how the school teaches them to be safe, for example when using computers. You worked with a local school to provide training in this area for staff and parents. Pupils feel very well looked after by teachers. This year, governors conducted a safeguarding audit and checked a wide range of safeguarding arrangements, in addition to their regular check of the single central record.

The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their child is safe and happy in school. Very nearly all agree that their child is well looked after. Indeed, one of your first acts as headteacher was to have a direct influence on improving site safety. As a parent pointed out, 'Safety at the school has also been improved, with the changing of the entrance for the children and the installation of road barriers outside the school.'

Inspection findings

- I pursued a number of lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remained good. The previous inspection report called for a range of actions around setting work to meet the different needs and abilities of learners. There has been great improvement in this area. Information on pupils' progress is now used to match work appropriately to the different abilities of pupils. For example, in a maths lessons pupils were choosing whether to use resources to help them. A parent volunteered the comment that: 'I have had children at this school with different needs and abilities. The school has encouraged and supported each one of my children in a way that is suited to them as individuals. I couldn't be happier.' However, leaders recognise that sometimes the most able are insufficiently challenged, for example pupils repeating a series of mathematics sums that may be too easy.
- My second line of enquiry explored whether there were differences in the quality of provision between key stages 1 and 2. In 2016, pupils' performance in the end of key stage 1 national tests was negatively affected by provision that had not sufficiently developed pupils' skills in the use of phonics. This has been addressed well. In key stage 1, the teaching of phonics is secure and sustained across the different ages. A range of adults work appropriately with small groups, ensuring

that pupils get a solid grounding in matching letters and sounds. The school's assessment information, preliminary results from 2017 national assessments, and pupils' work in books, indicate that outcomes in key stage 1 are now much stronger.

- The school's 2016 national phonics test results for Year 1 pupils were much better than those for the previous year. This year, Year 1 pupils achieved very well again in the national phonics test, demonstrating that recent improvements are being sustained.
- Key stage 2 assessment information from the school, pupils' work in books, and provisional national assessments shows that, while not quite as strong as last year, attainment is again above average and pupils' progress remains strong. While the focus on phonics at key stage 1 has led to considerable improvement in literacy for that age group, key stage 2 pupils have missed out on these improvements and, as a result, Year 6 pupils' spelling is a relative weakness.
- My final line of enquiry concerned the curriculum offered by the school. Since the previous inspection, the school has worked hard to combine meeting the additional demands in English and mathematics of the new national curriculum, with maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum. The school has been particularly successful in engaging with the National Gallery Take One Picture Project, exhibiting children's work there over the last two years. Another strength is the range of writing opportunities provided through the 'rich history' topics, for example, 'Why were horses so important in WWI?' Year 6 pupils combined their residential trip in France with a visit to the Somme, supported by study of the novel 'War Horse' as their whole-class reading book.
- Connections are made across the curriculum, with curriculum overviews for each year group. Opportunities for learning outside the classroom, including the on-site Forest School, are exploited well and really excite pupils and encourage their love of learning. Topics are taught through enquiries involving key questions involving rigorous assessment linked to outcomes. The school is currently extending the assessment approach to include all foundation subjects, as currently, the approach is focused largely on the humanities. Coverage of some subjects, for example music, is less well developed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders are given adequate time to check the quality of teaching of their subject
- there are more opportunities to train the whole staff in new initiatives and check on how well individual teachers are implementing them
- the effective approaches to maximising curriculum coverage are extended to cover all subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Brentwood, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, teachers and other staff, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. Together we visited each class to observe teaching, including listening to children reading in the early years and key stage 1, and visits to the Forest School and 'the Ark' breakfast club. We looked at pupils' books together to see progress in pupils' work across a range of subjects. I observed pupils around the school and in the playground. We reviewed school documents about self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding, including the single central record. I also considered the 93 responses to Parent View and 28 responses from staff.