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Mrs Annie McNally  
Headteacher  
St Malachy's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy  
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West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs McNally

### **Short inspection of St Malachy's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy headteacher, who was recently promoted from her assistant headteacher role, make a strong leadership team.

Leaders are very clear and honest in their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This means that school improvement priorities are appropriately focused on dealing with the most important areas for development. You have strong evidence of successfully making improvements. As a result of a new assessment system and staff training, teachers are now more accurately using information about how well pupils have learned to help them plan future lessons. This was identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection. You have also enabled staff to address the expectations of the national curriculum through working with others, for example with a mathematics hub. By developing leaders at all levels in your school, you have created an even greater capacity for further improvement.

You have ensured that the school continues to improve by developing a culture where staff value the training they receive and are keen to continually reflect on their teaching practice in order to develop it further. You have formed a cohesive team whose members relish the opportunity to learn from each other and to work with external partners. The quality of teaching continues to improve as a result.

Relationships between staff and pupils are friendly and considerate and contribute well to pupils' development.

Staff share your commitment to improving outcomes for pupils, many of whom begin their education with skills below those found typically for their age. Pupils catch up by the time they leave key stage 2, making good progress and achieving in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are acutely aware that children need to make more rapid progress in early years so that a far greater proportion are ready for the demands of the national curriculum in key stage 1 and beyond.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have created a vigilant culture of safeguarding throughout the school. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You work closely with other professionals and services to ensure that children and families receive timely and effective support. You make sure that staff receive regular training updates so that they are effective in recognising and responding to signs of concern.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and that staff look after them well. Pupils commented that, 'We are like one big family. The adults help us to get along with each other.' The curriculum provides many opportunities to support children in being safe. Consequently, pupils talk confidently about how to stay safe online and what they would do if someone was being unkind to them at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and take part in regular training to maintain their effectiveness. They understand the data relating to the school's performance and ensure that the management of staff performance is used to improve outcomes for pupils. Governors hold school leaders to account effectively, for example for the way leaders use pupil premium funding to raise achievement.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception has been well below the national average for the last few years. You and the governors have a strong desire to improve outcomes in early years and recognise that this is the school's greatest priority. Changes to staffing have been made and a range of external support has been established. The early years leader is starting to secure more accurate assessments of children's strengths and weaknesses on entering school. This has enabled her to begin adapting the classroom environment to support children in quickly developing early reading, writing and mathematical skills. Staff interact effectively with children and this is successful in developing children's spoken language.
- Work in books and lessons shows that pupils make a positive start in key stage 1 from their often low starting points. The vast majority of pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and many are making faster progress. However, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is still below the

national average. You know that pupils will need to make accelerated progress during key stage 1 to catch up quickly and be ready for the demands of the key stage 2 curriculum. Some pupils currently in key stage 1 did not develop accurate letter formation by the time they finished Reception. This is proving a barrier to the pupils' writing development and will need prompt action to enable them to make the necessary progress. Leaders have been keen to design the curriculum to enable pupils to access a range of memorable experiences which they may not otherwise experience. The curriculum is broad and interests pupils in learning about a wide range of subjects. This is supporting the strong progress being made by pupils in key stage 1.

- Leaders have developed a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. Resources and training have resulted in increased confidence and subject knowledge for staff. Consequently, pupils are quickly developing their phonics skills. Despite a dip in the phonics outcomes in 2016, performance in the phonics screening check has been consistently in line with or above the national average at Years 1 and 2 over time. In 2017, 82% of pupils met the Year 1 phonics standard. You are aware that disadvantaged pupils have not performed as strongly as other pupils nationally though, and have plans in place to support achievement in phonics for these pupils.
- Over time, pupils make good progress and generally achieve in line with the national average by the end of key stage 2. You were disappointed by the dip in outcomes in 2016 however, and took prompt action to address this. Consequently, outcomes were much stronger in 2017 with attainment in reading and mathematics above the national average and writing in line with the national average. Improvements were particularly rapid in mathematics as a result of the positive leadership of this subject. A consistent approach, along with a wealth of new resources and support from external providers have quickly improved teachers' expertise in teaching the mathematics curriculum. Pupils are particularly enjoying this new approach, with many saying that it is now their favourite subject.
- You have implemented successful systems to improve pupils' attendance. The learning mentors work closely with families to support pupils in attending school regularly. In addition, a range of incentives and rewards have raised the awareness of parents, carers and pupils about the importance of good attendance. Consequently, attendance has dramatically improved and the number of cases of persistent absence has sharply reduced.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children quickly develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills so that a greater proportion reach a good level of development by the end of Reception
- pupils in key stage 1 continue to make strong progress so that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics becomes closer to the national average

- there is a focus on developing pupils' handwriting skills in Reception and key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the acting deputy headteacher, the early years leader and two members of the governing body. I spoke to the chair of the trust and a representative from the Diocese of Leeds on the telephone. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, governing body meeting minutes, attendance records, and information about safeguarding. I spoke with several parents at the start of the school day and considered 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with a group of pupils from a range of year groups and spoke with a group of teaching staff. You and I visited every classroom together to observe teaching and learning, hear pupils read and scrutinise pupils' work in books.