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Miss Nicola Turner  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Turner

### **Short inspection of Ladymount Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 March 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since then, the school has experienced changes in senior leadership. Prior to you joining the school, there was a period of interim leadership with an acting headteacher. Your governors and middle leaders have ensured continued stability during this period of change. You and your deputy headteacher have quickly established yourselves and are working well as a team. You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

The school's Catholic ethos and motto, 'love one another, as I have loved you', permeates every aspect of school life. The school is a family-oriented and inclusive community. Pupils are happy, welcoming and well behaved. A typical comment from pupils is: 'Learning is challenging and fun. Everyone is very kind and loving.' Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They value the opportunities they have to take part in sports, trips and residential visits. You have a committed team of staff who work together well. Your staff feel well led and enjoy their work. Morale in the school is high.

All the parents whom I spoke with were extremely positive about the school. They told me that they find you and your staff friendly and approachable. As one parent commented: 'My child has excelled at this school, forming close friendships within a caring community.' All of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked leaders to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils in key stage 1. This issue has been addressed effectively. Teachers' strong questioning skills enable pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding well. The most able pupils are provided with activities that make them think deeply about their learning. The 2017 provisional key stage 1 results, the school's own assessment information and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that the most able pupils make good progress by the end of Year 2.

Children in the early years make strong progress from their starting points. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average. Pupils who read to me said how much they enjoyed reading. The least able pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to help them read unfamiliar words. The most able pupils read with fluency, expression and interest.

In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in reading and writing was significantly above the national average. In 2017, provisional key stage 2 outcomes show that pupils' progress in reading matches that found nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing was higher than the national average. However, you are aware that more pupils need to achieve greater depth in their writing in key stage 2.

You and your governors know that, over time, pupils have not done as well in mathematics as in reading and writing in key stage 2. You have already made pupils' learning in mathematics a priority. You acknowledge that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, while improving, are below those of other pupils nationally. You are determined to improve the standards that these pupils reach.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' safety is given high priority and staff are vigilant. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. The single central record is well maintained and up to date. There are comprehensive procedures in place for the recruitment and selection of staff. Staff and governors receive regular training and know what to do if they have any concerns. Safeguarding referrals are made in a timely manner and concerns are followed up appropriately. Leaders have established strong relationships with external agencies. Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Pupils are taught about how to stay safe online. They say that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff would help them if they did have a problem.

### **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to attendance. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown by their above-average attendance. However, the rates of absence and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities were higher than those of other pupils in 2016. Leaders and the family support officer work closely with families to improve

attendance. You have introduced a range of rewards to encourage pupils to come to school. The impact of these initiatives is that the rates of attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have increased. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school also continues to fall.

- The second focus for the inspection related to pupils' progress in writing. Compared with 2016, provisional data for 2017 indicates that pupils' progress in writing dropped slightly at the end of key stage 2. In response to this, you and your leadership team have designed the curriculum with exciting themes to ensure that pupils are engaged and enthused to write. Teachers use a range of high-quality texts to stimulate pupils' ideas for their own writing. Teachers ensure that pupils spell and punctuate accurately. Work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment information shows that pupils are now making good progress in writing. However, you acknowledge that not enough pupils in key stage 2 are reaching a greater depth of understanding writing.
- My line of enquiry relating to the progress of pupils in mathematics in key stage 2 matched your own concerns. You had already identified that pupils did not make rapid enough progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 in recent years. You have developed well-thought-out plans to address this. Pupils use practical work and jottings to support their learning. You are working with the subject leader to improve teachers' skills in developing pupils' fluency with number calculations. A review of current assessment information and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that progress in mathematics is improving. However, you acknowledge that this remains an area for further development.
- We agreed that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics across key stages 1 and 2 is below that of other pupils nationally. However, inspection evidence shows that these pupils are now catching up. You know the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and use pupil premium funding effectively to provide tailored interventions. For example, specialist speech and language support helps those pupils with specific learning difficulties. Leaders now check on the progress of disadvantaged pupils more closely. Teaching assistants provide extra support for those pupils who may have fallen behind. However, you acknowledge that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils needs to improve so that the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally diminishes more rapidly.
- Middle leaders have provided much-needed stability during a period of change in senior leadership. Middle leaders have a clear grasp of what the school needs to do to improve and they are taking an active role in bringing about the key improvements. They carefully track the progress of pupils.
- Governors are ambitious for the school. A governor commented: 'We want the children to be well rounded and fulfil their potential.' Governors offer effective support and challenge to leaders. They visit the school regularly and ask searching questions. You welcome the support and challenge from your school improvement advisor and representative from the diocese.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils achieve a greater depth of understanding in writing by the end of key stage 2
- progress in mathematics in key stage 2 improves further by building on pupils' fluency with number calculations
- the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally diminishes even more rapidly.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of middle leaders. I met with four governors including the chair of the governing body, your school improvement adviser and with a representative from the Diocese of Shrewsbury. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke informally with others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work across the school. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. I took account of 45 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 44 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 23 staff and 49 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including: policies to keep children safe; records of training; safeguarding checks; and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.