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Mrs Rachel Porter
Headteacher
Holy Family Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Porter

Short inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 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.

Since your recent appointment as headteacher, you have galvanised the staff following a period of significant staffing instability and have created a highly motivated team of leaders. You ensure that staff feel valued. As a result, they are eager to improve and they reflect well on their practice. Your approach has also won back the hearts and minds of parents and pupils. Parents described how you 'take time to understand the needs of each individual child'. Parents and pupils greatly value the fact that you are a visible presence at the start of the day. The school's open-door policy and the electronic communication that you have introduced keep parents well informed about the life of the school. Parents say that they feel part of the school once again.

Governors set a clear Christian vision for the school community. They provide appropriate challenge for school leaders. Leaders and governors show no complacency in their drive to improve the school. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Pupils love their school. They enjoy learning because teachers make it relevant and interesting. The relationships between adults and pupils in school are exceptional. Pupils are treated with genuine warmth. Staff act as excellent role models for pupils. Pupils feel proud to be part of the school.

The previous inspection provided two areas to improve. You have taken a great deal of effective action. The work in pupils' books successfully reflects the training that teachers have received on adapting work to suit pupils' needs. This is particularly evident in the raised standards in pupils' writing. In mathematics, pupils have greater opportunities to focus on their problem-solving skills. As part of this inspection, however, we agreed that the further development of pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics is an area for improvement. We also agreed that a common thread for school improvement is the development of middle leaders. You have established new leaders in role and have already taken effective action to support their development. We agreed that further support would capitalise on the good start that these leaders have made. These areas for improvement are already reflected in the leaders' and governors' plans to improve the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. As the designated lead for safeguarding, you ensure that any concerns are followed up swiftly. The training that you have organised ensures that all staff are aware of statutory regulations. All of the parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree that their children are safe in school. This is reflected in the positive opinions and good behaviour of pupils across the school. In the early years, children feel secure and display this through the way in which they confidently explore their environment. The older pupils that I spoke to agreed that they feel safe. They demonstrated a very good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online.

Staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe from harm. Your proactive approach is exemplified in the school's new policy for attendance, which draws on the lessons learned from national serious case reviews. The checks that the school undertakes on the appointment of staff are comprehensive. Appropriate supervision is in place for volunteers. You have already taken steps to ensure that full vetting checks are carried out on these volunteers, even though they are not required. This exemplifies the school's commitment to safeguarding pupils in the school.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, we agreed on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first was to look at how effectively leaders challenge the most able pupils in mathematics. The work in pupils' books shows that these pupils make consistently good progress across the school. The most effective learning takes place when pupils have opportunities to apply their calculation strategies to solve problems. However, the published data and the school's own data confirm that few of the most able pupils make accelerated progress in mathematics. Pupils' books show little evidence of pupils' mathematical reasoning skills. This arises because adults' questioning focuses on pupils' recall of known facts. As such, this limits pupils' ability to reason about their answers. Leaders have addressed this by providing additional support for the most able pupils to be able to explore mathematical reasoning in greater depth. However, the impact of this has not as yet been fully realised. We agreed that improving pupils' mathematical reasoning

skills through carefully thought-out questioning would enable some of the most able pupils to achieve even higher standards.

- The second key line of enquiry was to look at how effectively girls are supported to achieve high standards in science. The pupils I spoke to said that they enjoy science. The work in boys' and girls' books shows that they make similar gains in their subject knowledge. Leaders actively promote positive female roles in science through their links with industry, where pupils meet male and female scientists and engineers. Pupils have opportunities to undertake investigations but there is a lack of consistency in the way in which this is approached within different year groups. We agreed that the next step in the development of science at the school is to assess pupils' scientific working skills more consistently across the school. The new science leader has already led the way by leading staff meetings on this. However, we agreed that the development of middle leaders to strategically plan and evaluate their subjects is an area for improvement.
- Finally, we agreed to look at how effectively leaders use the sports funding to promote physical education (PE) and healthy lifestyles for pupils. The funding is used well to offer pupils a wide range of clubs and competitions. Governors rightly describe the school as 'punching above its weight' in terms of the considerable sporting success it has experienced in regional competitions over recent years. This is due to leaders' focus on promoting pupils' fitness and the principles of healthy competition. Pupils are engaged in their learning and participate in high-energy sports in lessons. PE and sport are used as a vehicle for pupils to develop their teamwork and respect for others, as well as developing pupils' own self-esteem. The PE leader is highly regarded and respected by staff, pupils and governors alike. He leads his area of responsibility with passion and is keen to develop his leadership skills further. We agreed that the strategic planning of the use of this funding is an area to improve to support the development of leadership in this area.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders develop their leadership skills to plan and evaluate the quality of the provision and pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility in greater depth
- teachers assess pupils' skills when working scientifically in a more consistent way across the school
- teachers develop their range of questioning techniques to promote pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for

the Diocese of Lancaster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. With the headteacher, I visited classes in key stage 1 and key stage 2. We also spoke to children about their experiences in the early years. I spoke to pupils informally about their work during lessons and heard them read their own and others' work as part of classroom activities. I reviewed documentation about safeguarding, which included the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I spoke with pupils about safeguarding, behaviour and their mathematics, science and physical education. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics and science work. I analysed minutes of governors' meetings, the school development plan, monitoring records and performance management targets for teaching staff. I took into account 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents at the start of the day and following an assembly.