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Mrs Lynsey Ankers
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ankers

Short inspection of St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You became headteacher in September 2013. Since joining the school, you have built upon the strengths of your predecessor. You have added a new sense of urgency to improving the school and have modernised many of the school's systems and structures. Aply supported by a new leadership team, you have built upon many of the school's established strengths while making improvements in key areas. Pupils' attendance has continued to improve. Rates of absence are well below the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school compares favourably with national figures. Pupils continue to benefit from compassionate support, care and guidance. Children have also continued to make fast progress during their time in the early years.

You have ensured that the school's pledge to develop pupils 'from smallest to greatest' underpins the school's work. You and other leaders have created a climate in which all staff are committed to unlocking every child's unique talents so they can grow and flourish while at the school. This commitment is reflected in the extensive range of enrichment opportunities that enable pupils to excel in a variety of pursuits. Some pupils thrive in different sporting and academic activities, whereas others hone their leadership skills by undertaking work that enhances the school and parish communities.

Parents are appreciative of the school's work. Typical comments from parents include: 'My child loves going to school; she enjoys all the lessons because teachers

make the learning fun and interesting, while at the same time challenging.' Another parent summed up the views of others when they described 'a fabulous and well-run school'. Pupils greatly value the support they receive from staff. They are particularly positive about teaching in mathematics. They also say, 'The school does everything they can to help you.' You have also ensured that staff morale is high. The staff share your balanced and perceptive understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They say that they value the school's team spirit and sense of community. They are keen to continue driving improvements across the school. Importantly, staff appreciate the consideration that leaders show for their well-being. A typical comment described how leaders 'make every effort not to overburden staff'.

You have used your intimate knowledge of the school to identify and address areas of relative weakness. For example, you have improved the teaching of mathematics throughout key stage 2. This has led to pupils making faster progress in this area. This work has been recognised by other schools locally. As a result, you play a leading role within the local cluster of schools to improve mathematics teaching. You have also worked with the governing body to improve its effectiveness. Governors have reduced the number of sub-groups to make sure their work is tightly focused on key school priorities. They hold you to account for all aspects of the school's work. For example, governors were instrumental in successfully addressing the dip in key stage 2 national test results in 2016.

You attach great significance to the quality of training undertaken by staff. You have provided many aspiring teachers and middle leaders with opportunities to improve different aspects of the school while also developing their leadership skills. You have also increased the scope of work with other schools. A number of your teachers work closely with the local authority to quality assure the accuracy of other schools' assessments of their pupils' attainment. Representatives from the local authority are very complimentary about the active role the school plays within its local cluster. You also value the opportunity to share ideas about teaching within the local group of Catholic schools.

You have effectively addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified during the previous inspection. You have made sure that your staff benefit from an extensive array of opportunities to share best practice. For example, you have created many opportunities for teachers to see their colleagues teach. You have also introduced systems for teachers to be coached and mentored. These systems have contributed significantly to the improvements to teaching that have been secured during your tenure. You have also ensured that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well across the wider curriculum. Teachers develop pupils' numeracy skills particularly effectively in science and geography. Pupils benefit from regular and varied opportunities to develop their extended writing in a range of subjects. You have also used the wider curriculum as another vehicle for promoting reading. Teachers regularly plan topics around an exciting novel. For example, pupils in Year 6 read 'Wonder' as part of their topic on identity and pupils in Year 5 read 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' to enhance their topic on children in

the Second World War. This work therefore complements other strategies that ensure pupils read widely as well as often.

You are ambitious for the school and its pupils. Consequently, you are keen to ensure that the school keeps improving and you are acutely aware of which areas need development. In particular, you understand that the most able pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. You also want to improve the quality of the curriculum beyond English and mathematics. You recognise that you need to develop middle leadership further so subject coordinators have the knowledge, skills and understanding to drive improvements in their areas. Finally, you acknowledge that plans to improve the school do not contain specific and measurable targets. This makes it difficult for governors and leaders to measure the effectiveness of different actions taken to improve the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a strong safeguarding culture within the school. Members of staff share your understanding of the safeguarding risks that are potentially more prevalent within the local community. You have ensured that your staff are alert to any changes in pupils' mood or behaviour. Your work with parents is very strong. Your staff employ a number of strategies to build positive, caring and open relationships with parents. This lays strong foundations for working in partnership with parents to keep their children safe. In particular, you employ a number of strategies to support parents to keep children safe when online, including: e-safety workshops; regular updates and reminders in the school newsletter; and discussions with class teachers during parents' evenings.

You have also ensured that the curriculum helps to develop pupils' understanding of safety. For example, your work to develop an age-appropriate understanding of what constitutes healthy relationships is particularly strong. You have also developed a safeguarding policy for pupils, which supports them with important matters of judgement, such as when touching and secrets are 'good or bad'.

Leaders have ensured that all staff undertake regular training on matters relating to safety. They refer concerns, as appropriate, to leaders. You have ensured that all safeguarding records are precise and fit for purpose. You work effectively with a range of external agencies to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- The inspection followed a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was how effectively teaching is enabling the most able pupils to make fast progress throughout the school. You have made developments in this area a main focus. We observed lessons and looked at pupils' work in a range of subjects. This evidence confirmed that teachers are beginning to adopt a more systematic approach to challenging the most able pupils. This reflects the work you have led to increase teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve.

- You also explained how you have made work in this area a key focus for staff training. For example, teachers have undertaken training on how to develop the most able pupils' mathematical reasoning. Furthermore, you have targeted your activities to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in this important area. Your own records confirm that your staff are getting better at challenging the most able pupils to make quicker progress.
- Despite this, the school's own assessment information does not currently demonstrate that the most able pupils are making faster progress. You presented evidence that indicates that the most able pupils are beginning to make faster progress in Year 6 in writing and mathematics. However, we also collected evidence that indicates that the most able pupils are not being challenged as effectively in subjects beyond English and mathematics.
- A second line of enquiry considered the extent to which the curriculum is enabling pupils to make fast progress in subjects beyond English and mathematics. You explained how you are developing the role of middle leaders to facilitate the necessary improvements. For example, at the end of the previous academic year, subject coordinators started to track pupils' progress across the wider curriculum. Middle leaders have also started to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in their curriculum areas. As a result, this area of the school's work is developing momentum.
- Despite this, you and your staff acknowledge that this work is in its infancy. You also accept that the quality of teaching in these subjects is more variable than it is in English and mathematics. Furthermore, the extent to which teachers focus on the development of subject-specific skills varies greatly between subjects and teachers. For example, teachers adopt significantly different approaches to the development of historical, geographical and scientific skills. Consequently, you do not underestimate the importance of improving this aspect of the school's work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leadership is developed further so that greater attention is paid to the quality of the curriculum, and pupils' progress, in subjects beyond English and mathematics
- teachers have high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve, and consistently provide them with work that challenges them to make rapid progress across the curriculum
- plans to improve the school contain quantifiable targets against which progress can be measured.

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 Blackpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders. I also met with members of the governing body. I spoke with the school's improvement partner and a representative from the local authority. I met formally with a group of pupils and talked informally with others around school. I met formally with a group of staff, which included teachers and teaching assistants.

Leaders accompanied me on visits to classes, where I observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects. I also looked at work produced by pupils throughout the school in subjects other than English and mathematics.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. In addition, I scrutinised a range of policies, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation report. I also looked at the school's website.

As part of the inspection, I considered 19 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I also looked at 28 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 25 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. Twenty-four comments from parents received by Ofsted's free-text facility were also considered.