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Miss Mary Frain  
Headteacher  
St Teresa's RC Primary School  
Callander Road  
Hartlepool  
TS25 3BG

Dear Miss Frain

### **Short inspection of St Teresa's RC Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 April 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you provide strong leadership and demonstrate a clear, determined vision for the school. You are well supported by a skilled leadership team and a strong governing body. The values of your school are alive and strong among staff and pupils alike. As a community, you respect each other and the diversity of talent at the school. Together, you value opportunities to learn and have positive relationships, and you take your responsibility to be welcoming, hardworking, polite and understanding seriously.

Leaders and governors have an accurate and detailed view of the school's strengths, as well as areas that need further development. This stems from excellent systems used to monitor the quality of teaching and track pupils' progress and the standards that they reach. Leaders gather information from a range of sources to inform development plans skilfully. As a result, you have already developed provision in areas on which this inspection focused, and your work is proving fruitful.

The level of focus and commitment to learning among the pupils at school is palpable. In lessons, pupils listen attentively, and express themselves with confidence and conviction. They show a high level of independence, and listen carefully to the advice they receive from their teachers to further improve their work. Pupils are proud of the work they produce. Presentation of work is strong, and pupils contribute to wonderful displays around the school. This positive attitude to learning, combined with a strong moral and spiritual focus, is key to the success

of the school.

You are proud of the broad curriculum that the school provides, and rightly so. In addition to events and clubs that take place after school, a wide variety of opportunities are on offer during the school day. During the inspection, for example, I observed pupils studying science, practising for a French nativity play, discussing the meaning of verses from the book of Psalms, and learning to play the ukulele. Topic books show a wide range of themes and activities, which often start with a 'Wow!' event or activity. Pupils at school look forward, for example, to meeting Maximus the soldier when studying Roman lifestyle and culture. In this way, you bring learning to life. You have also identified the need to develop assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics. This forms part of your improvement planning.

The school works hard to promote positive engagement with parents. Parents benefit from a variety of events to help them understand the curriculum and how subjects are taught. Parents of children in the early years, for example, have recently been working with their children in school on 'Spooktacular Day', working together on a variety of tasks. As a result of this increased participation, parents are increasingly involved in the ongoing assessment of their children in the early years.

The vast majority of parents who completed the online survey would recommend the school to other parents. One parent, summing up the views of many, wrote: 'What is important to me is the lengths the staff go to in caring and educating the pupils; I have no hesitation in recommending this school to others, and I feel fortunate that my children are receiving their education here.'

The previous inspection identified the need to raise achievement in mathematics, to further improve the quality of teaching, to improve the impact of leaders by sharpening the understanding of achievement in the early years, and to sharpen the improvement planning process. You are continuing to focus on the teaching of mathematics, which is improving. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, there is an excellent understanding of achievement in the early years, and improvement planning is strong, based on a thorough understanding of achievement data. You are therefore addressing all these recommendations successfully.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records of any incidents or issues are of high quality. Staff and governors have received comprehensive training, and they are clear about what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' safety or well-being.

Pupils feel safe in school. When speaking to me, pupils indicated that bullying is rare, and that if other pupils ever make unkind remarks about others, teachers swiftly deal with this. Pupils are encouraged to think about the impact of their actions by filling in 'think sheets' if their behaviour falls short of the high standards

evident at the school. They were able to tell me about the importance of e-safety, and to reflect on recent work in science by explaining how to stay safe when using electricity.

You and other staff are successful in highlighting the importance of tolerance as a British value. Some pupils talked about different religious perspectives with confidence and understanding. Others talked about English lessons where they have been studying 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' and how this helped them understand different backgrounds and helped them develop a deeper respect for others.

You and other school leaders work well with outside agencies to help keep more vulnerable pupils safe. You have successfully encouraged these pupils to attend school regularly, which was one of the areas of focus for this inspection. You are committed to ensuring that pupils are safe, both physically and emotionally. Pupils understand the policies and procedures designed to keep them safe, and their behaviour towards each other is based on respect.

### **Inspection findings**

- Together, we looked at four areas of school life in addition to safeguarding. Through the inspection process, it was clear that you, other leaders and governors know your school well, and already have plans in place to further improve outcomes for pupils in these areas.
- We looked at the progress and achievement in mathematics of pupils currently at the school. Teachers have developed their own understanding of how to teach problem solving and reasoning over the past year, and this is now embedded in teaching across the school. Professional development linked to mathematics has been a high priority, both for teachers and for other staff. Pupils told me how much they enjoy lessons, and that they now look at mathematics problems in different ways which help them understand concepts more easily. You are pleased that standards in the key stage 2 mathematics assessments in 2017 showed improvement but acknowledge that progress still needs to improve. By contrast, progress in the books of current pupils is accelerating as pupils are more fully engaged in the new curriculum. You recognise that maintaining this good progress remains an area upon which to focus. We also saw that the pupils are fully engaged with the new mathematics curriculum at school and are making good progress in lessons. A detailed book scrutiny showed the gains pupils are making in their understanding of mathematical concepts.
- We considered the progress different groups of pupils make in reading and writing. Knowing the pupils in your school well, you have individual targets for all of your pupils based on the progress they are making and the standards they are reaching. Specifically, you and the assistant headteacher have identified that although most pupils reach the expected standard, too few reach higher standards from their starting points in reading and writing. You have been focusing on key pupils through quality assurance, performance management and lesson observations. You have been tailoring teaching and support for these

pupils. As a result, rates of progress are increasing.

- Our next line of enquiry was to look at the way in which subjects other than mathematics and English are taught, to ensure that pupils enjoy a broad curriculum diet. Detailed scrutiny of science and topic books, together with direct observations of teaching, highlighted the importance leaders place on covering a wide range of subjects in depth throughout the school. Pupils are making good progress as a result.
- Our final line of enquiry was to consider how well leaders and teachers in the early years are shaping provision to meet the needs of children. Our findings indicate that the early years provision is very flexible because ongoing assessment of children is excellent. As a result, activities are tightly matched to the individual learning needs of the children. The dip in attainment in 2017 has been analysed and steps are in place to support Year 1 pupils who did not reach expected levels. Practitioners are skilled in guiding children to activities as they move around the setting freely. The newly enhanced outdoor area is exciting and allows children to imagine, to adventure, and to learn about the world around them.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- rates of progress for all pupils are as high as they can be in mathematics
- a greater proportion of pupils reach the highest standards during their time at school.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body, including the chair, and a group of middle leaders. I also met with a group of pupils and discussed their work and the progress that they are making. Together, you and I visited classes in each phase of the school to look at the impact of the work to develop the quality of teaching. During these visits, I looked at pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their learning. I spoke to you and other senior leaders about the progress pupils are making and how you ensure that you keep pupils safe. I also walked around the school to look at pupils' behaviour

and conduct at social times. I looked at the 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and took into account the eight responses to the staff survey. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies and other information available on the school's website.

I focused particularly on the progress pupils are making in mathematics, the progress of children in the early years, and the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching. I looked at the progress pupils are making in subjects other than English and mathematics. I also looked closely at pupils' rates of attendance and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.