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Mr Neil Metcalf
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Metcalf

Short inspection of St Anthony of Padua Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2018, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have shaped a school community where pupils say that they feel, 'there is something for everyone'. 'Growing together, following Jesus' is your mantra. Pupils grow and develop through the diverse opportunities the school can offer. You encourage them to 'seize the day' and they do. Pupils value the chance to take part in a wide range of activities. They excel in sports such as gymnastics, swimming, cross-country, chess and bridge. The aspirational culture that you have created inspires pupils and staff to strive for excellence.

Staff feel extremely proud to be a part of the school community. Alongside your deputy headteacher, you have created a loyal and enthusiastic team. Staff are passionate about improving further the quality of their teaching. The staff with whom I spoke explained to me how leaders challenge and support them to excel professionally. Parents and carers consider the staff friendly and approachable. Parents are equally supportive of the school. They consider your appointment as the headteacher to be a major factor in the improvements that they have seen.

The diverse skill-set of the governing body means that they ask challenging questions of leaders. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Pupils' progress is at the heart of everything the governors do. They frequently review the effectiveness of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes. The governors also share your eagerness in ensuring that pupils can enjoy a wide variety of experiences. The governing body provides you with a high

level of challenge. This continues to ensure that the school is going from strength to strength.

Your own evaluation of the school is incisive and accurate. You have addressed the areas identified at the last inspection. Rates of pupils' progress underpin your plans for improving the school. Teachers explained to me how pupils' progress is the starting point of their professional conversations with leaders. Teachers refine and develop their approach through training. They say that they feel motivated by ambitious targets and feel that leaders and governors are supportive. Leaders have high expectations of staff and adopt an analytical approach to school improvement. Leaders' approach is securing even better outcomes for pupils.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to improve teaching and learning by ensuring that most-able pupils get on with challenging tasks more quickly. This is something you have addressed and it is particularly evident in mathematics. You have changed the way teachers plan for the most able pupils. Teachers plan their use of teaching assistants more effectively. This ensures that the most able pupils can access tasks that are more difficult sooner. Teachers routinely plan activities that allow pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. This is ensuring that the most able pupils are making more rapid progress, particularly at key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The system for ensuring that all adults are suitable to work with children is secure. Training for governors and staff is appropriate and up to date. Staff understand the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about a child.

Parents and staff have a shared confidence that pupils are safe at school. All pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey, and those with whom I spoke, feel safe. They explained to me how they are happy in school. Pupils say that they feel there is someone in school they can go to if they have a problem. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including online. Bullying is rare. Pupils demonstrate an understanding and tolerance of different cultures, families, faiths and backgrounds.

Inspection findings

- I was interested to know about the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Overall, pupils' attendance at the school has been consistently good. However, the rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have been above national averages.
- You have worked with tenacity to ensure that all pupils and their parents understand the importance of good attendance. Leaders have introduced a number of strategies to encourage high levels of attendance. For example, you have introduced rewards for those pupils who have good attendance. These are having a positive effect. You are also carefully monitoring rates of absence. This

allows to staff to help families ensure that their children attend school regularly. Your actions have reduced rates of absence. The current attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.

- Another aspect I was interested in was boys' progress in reading, particularly at key stage 2. This is because, in the past, boys have made slower progress than girls have in their reading. You have put measures in place to improve the progress that boys make in their reading. Teachers' monitoring of pupils' progress in reading quickly identifies pupils who fall behind. Staff ensure that they receive extra help and appropriate support to catch up.
- You acknowledge that, in the past, some of the boys do not read as widely or as often as other pupils. You are committed to ensuring that all pupils enjoy reading. In order to achieve this, leaders have acted quickly. For example, you have invested in texts that you think will be more appealing to boys. These are starting to improve boys' attitudes to reading. Leaders also organise regular visits to the local library and the 'story barn'. This allows pupils to choose from a wider range of texts. These initiatives are helping more boys to enjoy reading. Nonetheless, you acknowledge that there is still work to do in ensuring that boys read widely and often.
- I was also interested in whether the curriculum had sufficient breadth. Pupils are able to benefit from a curriculum that is broad and balanced. The development of the wider curriculum has been a priority for leaders. You have appointed subject leaders who regularly check on learning across the wider curriculum. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching. Subject leaders also ensure clear paths of progression from Reception to Year 6 in subjects such as religious education, geography and design technology.
- Leaders are passionate and committed to providing a curriculum that is 'rich'. Leaders' work in this area has secured improvements. Highly relevant educational visits support pupils' progress in history. For example, a recent visit to Chester supported pupils with their work on the Romans. In pupils' books, it is clear that teaching meets pupils' needs in a range of subjects. For example, teachers plan learning in history that matches pupils' capabilities. Pupils can develop their skills as historians. For example, in Year 5, pupils use a range of sources to produce detailed and articulate responses to the question, 'Who was Alfred the Great and why was he great?'
- Teachers' accurate assessment of pupils' progress in the wider curriculum is already allowing pupils to make more rapid progress. Nonetheless, you acknowledge that your assessment systems are sharper in reading, writing, mathematics and science. We agreed that teachers' assessment of pupils' prior learning in the wider curriculum needs embedding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to engage boys in their reading, so that boys read more widely and more often, particularly at key stage 2
- leaders embed assessment across the wider curriculum to allow teachers to plan learning that meets pupils' needs in all of their subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, a group of teachers and a group of pupils. I also met with an adviser from the local authority, a representative from the Archdiocese of Liverpool and some members of the governing body. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. Leaders accompanied me on visits to classes, where I observed teaching and learning across subjects. I looked at work produced by pupils in reading and the wider curriculum.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings and leaders' self-evaluation. I also looked at the school's website.

I considered 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 12 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I also took into account 111 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 68 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.