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Mrs Joanne Cartmell  
Headteacher  
Holy Spirit Catholic and Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Cartmell

### **Short inspection of Holy Spirit Catholic and Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 December 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school's Christian values permeate its work. Within the school's motto, references to 'loving gently' and 'acting justly' are unmistakable features of the school's ethos. Each day starts with you warmly greeting pupils and their parents and carers as they arrive. The culture of care, respect and high standards of behaviour that you and staff have established ensures that pupils feel safe, secure and loved. You lead by example and your staff are proud to be part of your team.

You have been a senior leader of the school for some time and headteacher for just over two years. You and your deputy headteacher work well as a team. Together you are improving the school's provision and pupils' achievements. In your first year as headteacher, the long-term cycle of low attainment at the end of key stage 1 was broken. Year 2 pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics improved considerably and were close to the national average in 2016. This improvement was maintained in 2017. Test results at the end of key stage 2 also improved in your first year as headteacher. In the 2016 national tests and assessments, Year 6 pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics were at least in line with those of pupils nationally, and progress was in the top 20% of schools. The 2017 tests and assessments showed that despite a dip in standards, pupils still made good progress. Within this positive picture of improvement, in both years and at both key stages, achievement in mathematics has been weaker than in reading. You are

ensuring that mathematics is receiving specific attention as part of the school's current improvement priorities.

You are committed to improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, who are the largest pupil group in the school. In particular, you want to ensure that this group of pupils are not held back by weak literacy and numeracy skills when they move on to secondary school. You maintain a resolute focus on the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. You and other leaders make frequent, rigorous checks on how well teaching in these core subjects meets your high expectations and enables disadvantaged pupils and other groups of pupils, including the most able, to make good progress. You and the deputy headteacher also regularly analyse teachers' assessments of pupils' learning. You use this information to discuss pupils' achievements with teachers and to check that all groups of pupils are making the progress you expect. Where this is not the case, additional support is provided to help pupils catch up. In all of these checks, you and other leaders are mindful of the previous inspection's recommendation about challenging the most able pupils. Inspection evidence confirms that this has been addressed effectively, although this is not yet fully reflected in published assessment results.

The thorough monitoring processes that you have established enable you to be clear about the quality of teaching and learning and make accurate evaluations of the school's effectiveness. While a current priority is to ensure that all teaching is at least good, this is mainly to build on the strengths in teaching that you have identified, rather than to address any specific weaknesses. Currently you are focused on ensuring that more pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are adequately prepared for secondary school when they leave Year 6. This is appropriate, especially in mathematics where standards are less robust. You recognise that by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, not enough pupils are attaining the higher standards in mathematics, and by the end of Year 6, not enough disadvantaged pupils are attaining the expected standard in this subject.

The school's aim to recognise each child's talents and qualities so that all reach their potential is driving current work to improve the curriculum. Your ambitious plan includes increased opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors and extending the range of educational visits to widen pupils' horizons. You have been innovative in employing subject specialists to teach science, art and design, and physical education. As a result, pupils' skills in these subjects are very well developed. Throughout the school, the art work on display is of an exceptional standard and pupils are rightly proud of their accomplishments. In science, pupils have many opportunities to undertake practical investigations that develop their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas and vocabulary. Your employment of specialist teachers has also helped to reduce the workload of your own staff, because the specialist teachers plan lessons and assess pupils' achievements. You are careful, however, to ensure that your staff have scheduled opportunities to work alongside these specialists. Not only does this support your own staff's professional development, it also ensures that they do not become deskilled in teaching these subjects. The focus this year is on extending the breadth and depth of pupils' learning in history, geography, music and Spanish.

The high profile that Christian values have across the school makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is clear that pupils are given experiences that link to the principles of British values and to respecting the rights of others. Nevertheless, the many opportunities that exist within the curriculum to ensure that pupils know what British values are and to deepen their understanding of these values are not being exploited well enough.

The pupils and parents I spoke to had very positive things to say about your school. Pupils said that teachers were kind, made lessons interesting and fun and helped them if they were struggling with their work. The parents I spoke to used words and phrases such as 'amazing', 'brilliant', 'can't fault it' and 'staff are always there for you', to describe their experience of your school. Parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey were not quite as positive, particularly in relation to questions about behaviour and how your school deals with bullying. However, in a survey that you conducted less than a fortnight earlier, parents' responses to the same questions were considerably more positive. The reasons for this difference are unclear. I noted, however, that your school's behaviour policy provides little information about how you prevent and deal with bullying. Your behaviour log includes significant detail about incidents of misbehaviour and how these have been resolved. However, it does not include any information about how allegations of bullying, which are rare, have been investigated and resolved.

You receive strong support from your governors, who are good friends to the school. Governors ask you and other leaders pertinent questions about pupils' achievement. They monitor the school's finances conscientiously and prioritise funding that will make the biggest impact on pupils' achievement and well-being.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team ensures that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The checks that are made to determine the suitability of adults to work with children are robust. All staff receive regular safeguarding training to ensure that they know how to identify the signs of abuse or neglect. Staff are very aware of the importance of referring any concerns they have about pupils' safety to you and are vigilant in doing so. You log details of safeguarding concerns thoroughly and, where appropriate, refer these to social services and other professional agencies. The records of your communications with these professionals are detailed and clear.

Pupils are closely supervised at lunchtime. Pupils explained that if they are worried about anything they would be confident in sharing this with teachers and other staff. Pupils learn about different types of bullying and are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

### **Inspection findings**

- Pupils' weaker achievement in mathematics was a line of enquiry for the inspection. Your school is in the second year of implementing improvements to the curriculum and teaching of mathematics. At the start of this process, your

mathematics leader accurately identified weaknesses that prevented pupils from acquiring a deep understanding of mathematical ideas. Since then, pupils have had significantly more opportunities to think mathematically and solve mathematical problems. The leader recognises that the teaching of this aspect of mathematics has improved, but is not yet consistently strong, as improvements are still being embedded. Ensuring consistently good questioning by teachers to deepen pupils' learning remains a focus. Another is to provide additional time to further develop pupils' knowledge of mathematical facts and sharpen their mental calculation skills. Actions to address these areas feature within the school's improvement plan for mathematics. The plan contains milestones and information about how and when the success of the actions will be evaluated. However, these criteria are not precise enough to allow leaders to assess the impact the actions have had, particularly on pupils' standards and progress.

- The school's Year 1 phonic check results show that few pupils who need extra support with their learning attain the phonics standards expected of Year 1 pupils. This was another line of enquiry for the inspection. Having reviewed the specific needs and circumstances of these pupils, I am satisfied that they have been supported effectively in learning phonics. Many pupils achieve the expected standard in Year 2 and are now using phonics successfully to help them read and write. You explained that a new phonics scheme is being introduced in the early years and key stage 1. During our learning walk, we observed some very effective learning taking place in phonics sessions. You are keeping an eye on the implementation of the new scheme to ensure that improvements are maintained.
- My final line of enquiry was about how well leaders and governors fulfil their duty to actively promote fundamental British values. This arose because I found no information on the school's website to indicate the school's strategy to embed fundamental British values in its work. Of the pupils I spoke to during the inspection, few had heard of British values. Your curriculum provides pupils with many worthwhile opportunities to learn about cultures and religions different from their own. As a result, pupils appreciate and respect these aspects of diversity. Opportunities for pupils to learn about other aspects of diversity, such as different families and relationships, are not as well represented within the curriculum. Your curriculum review is paying good attention to developing breadth and depth in pupils' learning of subjects. However, not enough consideration is being given to identifying opportunities within subjects to deepen pupils' understanding of British values and ideas about equality and diversity.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make even stronger progress in mathematics so that by the end of both key stages more pupils attain the expected standard and the higher standard
- the improvement plan for mathematics enables leaders to more precisely evaluate the impact of actions on improving pupils' achievement and provision
- pupils develop a deeper and more explicit understanding of fundamental British values, equalities issues and the full range of diversity in modern Britain

- parents are given more information about the school's work to prevent and deal with bullying, and the school's behaviour log includes information to show how any allegations of bullying have been investigated and resolved.

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

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's evaluation of its work and priorities for improvement. I reviewed a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding and behaviour. I held a meeting with three governors and a separate meeting with a representative from Wirral local authority, your school improvement partner and representatives from the Catholic and Anglican dioceses. Jointly, we observed learning and behaviour in lessons for phonics and mathematics. I had a discussion with your leader of mathematics and we reviewed a sample of pupils' work in mathematics. I had a formal discussion with a group of key stage 2 pupils and spoke to other pupils informally at lunchtime. Some pupils from key stage 1 read to me. I spoke to approximately 20 parents as they brought their children to school. I considered 20 responses to Ofsted's online parents' survey, Parent View, including nine written comments. I took account of 79 responses to a recent parental survey conducted by the school. I reviewed 15 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupils' survey.