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Mrs Gerida Montague
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Montague

Short inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 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. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your able team of senior staff lead the school with a high degree of compassion and diligence, which is reflected in the caring and inclusive ethos throughout the school. Pupils told me that the school's values of 'God, love, family' are important to them. As one said: 'We get on well together because we are a family.' Governors share your vision to serve the local community well. Parents, too, value the school's positive ethos. Typical comments made by parents included: 'I have been really impressed by the sense of community'; and, 'Staff at Holy Family really care.'

Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has strengthened further. Leaders across your partnership schools work together very effectively, using their expert knowledge of how children learn best to create an atmosphere where pupils learn enthusiastically and their talents can blossom. Staff feel valued in their work. They appreciate your commitment to enabling them to constantly reflect on and sharpen their professional practice. Parents speak highly of

the school's teachers. One parent wrote: 'The standard of teaching is second to none. The teachers are kind and approachable.' Pupils told me that they feel supported in their learning, one saying: 'Teachers will always help.'

Pupils achieve highly because leaders and staff are determined that they do so. This is especially evident in the early years, where excellent teaching ensures that most children quickly progress to reach a good level of development. At the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average. Since 2016, an increasing proportion of pupils have exceeded the standards expected of their age. This demonstrates rapid progress for most pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils are well behaved around the school and in lessons. Pupils exhibit impressive attitudes to learning, including increasing resilience as they progress through the school. Classrooms are organised, studious places. Pupils respond very well to the interesting curriculum. Several proudly showed me their books, demonstrating that they work productively and enthusiastically in all subjects and topics. Reading is a particular strength. Pupils practise reading in school daily, and all I spoke to could name a favourite book or author. The curriculum is enriched with popular residential visits, trips and clubs, thoughtfully designed to ensure that pupils try new experiences, including several musical and sporting activities. The forthcoming Year 6 trip to Devon is being eagerly anticipated by pupils.

You, leaders and governors have an accurate insight into the school's strengths and areas which could be further refined. Governors hold leaders to account well, asking the right questions in meetings and visiting the school to check the impact of your work. You have successfully improved the areas which inspectors asked you to work on at the last inspection, so that your assessment systems now show pupils' rapid progress in each year more clearly and pupils regularly practise problem-solving in mathematics. Your current focus on ensuring that a larger proportion of pupils exceed the standards expected for their age is well judged.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make all the required checks on the suitability of adults to work with children. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection procedures and know that they will be listened to should they raise a concern. Leaders act promptly and tenaciously to get extra help for children who need it, including from outside agencies. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that an adult would help if any pupils fell out with each other or if anyone needed help with a problem. The curriculum helps pupils to understand aspects of personal safety, such as how to use roads safely and the importance of not giving away personal information online.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's

provision, including: pupils' attendance; pupils' rates of progress, particularly for the most able; the quality of provision in the early years; the effectiveness of the leadership of teaching and learning; the quality of provision in mathematics; and the quality of pupils' writing across the curriculum.

- Pupils respond well to the high profile that attendance is given, so that most pupils attend school regularly. Pupils appreciate the rewards they receive for 100% attendance, such as having tea and cake with you. Leaders carefully track the attendance of the few pupils who have irregular attendance, providing additional work for any likely to be absent for a while and keeping the local authority informed of pupils' whereabouts.
- Staff challenge pupils from their different starting points very well. They employ a range of methods to make sure that pupils achieve and sustain the attainment expected for their age. Pupils attain well. When pupils do fall behind, staff offer effective support to help these pupils catch up with their peers. Teachers check that work is set at the right level to challenge pupils, and that there is always harder work available once pupils have grasped a concept. Leaders' sharp focus on increasing pupils' vocabulary and developing their use of language is ensuring that pupils are able to explain their thinking whatever subject they are learning about. As a result, increasing proportions are exceeding expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics over time.
- The early years provision is a strength of the school. A large proportion of children join the school with starting points below those typical for their age. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is extremely well organised, interesting and engaging. During my visit, children were engrossed in learning, for example as they figured out why raisins could dance in lemonade, or hunted for insects outside. Adults track carefully what children can and cannot yet do as they progress through the curriculum. Adults' guidance, particularly their skilfully posed questions which steer children to explain their thinking, ensures that children make rapid progress during their time in the early years. The development of their vocabulary and writing is a real strength, with numerous and frequent opportunities provided for them to write about what they are experiencing and learning.
- The quality of leadership is extremely strong, particularly the leadership of teaching and learning. Leaders have a systematic approach to developing and refining teachers' skills, which works exceptionally well. Staff feel very well supported, and particularly appreciate the range of professional development opportunities provided both in school and with numerous partner schools. Consequently, teaching is of high quality, allowing pupils to achieve highly. Leaders' skills are recognised by external organisations: the executive headteacher is a 'national leader of education' and the school provides teacher training for the local university and other providers.
- Teachers have skilfully adapted their practice to meet the increased demands of the revised mathematics curriculum. New resources help pupils to gain a deeper understanding of number. A higher priority has, rightly, been given to problem-solving and developing reasoning skills. Pupils know that they need to be able to 'prove it' and find multiple ways to explain their answers. As a result, pupils' rates

of progress in mathematics have improved rapidly, so that they are now very strong. A larger proportion now exceed the nationally expected standards than in the past.

- Leaders have given a high priority to making sure that pupils make rapid progress in writing throughout their time in school. Leaders' highly organised and systematic approach to how writing is taught means that pupils progressively build their skills right from the early years. Pupils edit and improve their work and are able to explain their choices of language well. This approach enables pupils to write in detail and accurately across the whole curriculum. Leaders' emphasis on broadening pupils' vocabulary is particularly effective in helping them to succeed. Consequently, pupils' work across a broad range of subjects is of a high quality. Pupils' work demonstrates that they learn and develop their literacy and subject-specific skills very well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a larger proportion of pupils exceed expected standards in each year group.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Portsmouth (Roman Catholic), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, a representative from the local authority and the chair of governors. With leaders, I observed learning in several classes across the school and scrutinised a range of pupils' work. I met with two groups of pupils to discuss their work and experiences in school. I spoke to pupils during playtimes and in lessons. I considered the views of the 16 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to several parents in the playground at the start of the day. I took account of the 32 survey responses submitted by staff, as well as meeting with groups of staff during the day. I analysed a variety of school documentation, including performance information, school improvement planning, governance records, notes of monitoring visits and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.