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Mr Mark Holdsworth
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mr Holdsworth

Short inspection of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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. Under your strong, confident leadership, the school continues to grow and thrive. You and your staff have successfully created a school community that is both nurturing and a place of good-quality learning.

Pupils work hard in a safe, stimulating environment. Relationships between pupils and adults are extremely positive. Pupils told me that they enjoy school and feel happy and safe. One pupil said that 'teachers teach us in a fun way'. Teachers plan interesting learning activities and offer pupils a good level of challenge. For example, in Year 6, teaching skilfully challenged the pupils' understanding of the thoughts and feelings of others when Lazarus rose from the dead. In Year 3, pupils were enjoying the task of investigating problems about fractions.

The school has a clear faith-based ethos which supports both the academic and personal development of each child. The school's strapline, 'A place of learning. A community of Christ', is at the heart of all its work. The vast majority of parents and carers that I spoke to, or who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are very positive about the school and would recommend it to others. Many said that their children enjoy coming to school. One parent said, 'This is a great school with caring staff and a dedicated headteacher.' Most responded that they were well informed about the progress that their children make, and communication is regular between school and home. Parents particularly liked some of the opportunities they have to be involved in the life of the school, such as the recent international evening.

All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to be part of Our Lady's Primary and enjoy working at the school. Staff feel well supported, and are treated fairly and with respect. Staff share the school's vision and aspirations, reflected in the strong sense of the staff team working together to achieve the best for pupils.

Your detailed self-evaluation clearly identifies the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Areas in the school improvement plan are being tackled with rigour, as you and your senior leaders take responsibility for different aspects effectively. Governors monitor progress towards achieving the school's targets well to ensure that the school continues to be on track. You have identified the need to improve the teaching of geography across the school to ensure that pupils develop their knowledge and skills more effectively. Writing at the end of key stage 2 is well above the national standard. However, writing in other subjects such as geography is not yet as strong.

You have successfully addressed the improvement areas identified in the previous inspection report. Leaders have supported staff to improve their questioning skills in lessons and through feedback given to pupils on their work. Teachers and support staff ask probing questions that ensure that pupils think more deeply about their answers. Pupils value the feedback they are given, saying that it helps them to improve their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. You have created a culture of vigilance in the school, making sure that arrangements are robust. The governor responsible for safeguarding checks that policy guidelines are followed and reviewed on a regular basis to improve their effectiveness. She also verifies, at frequent intervals, that the school's single central record is maintained accurately. Safer recruitment procedures are followed stringently. Staff are extremely vigilant about reporting any concerns about pupils.

You know the families that attend the school very well and keep a close eye on their welfare, especially those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. You work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils receive the care and support they need. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. However, you take decisive action should attendance give cause for concern. Parents appreciate the lengths to which you go to provide an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere where every child is valued and cherished. Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school because of the good care given by staff.

Pupils are taught about how to stay safe online. This work is supported by the Year 5 and Year 6 digital leaders, who share updates on internet safety. Workshops for pupils and meetings for parents about e-safety are also an annual event. Pupils behave very well. They told me that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are extremely rare. Pupils feel well supported and are confident that any issues that do occur are quickly resolved.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. We agreed the following lines of enquiry: how successfully leaders have improved teaching, particularly in reading and mathematics; how effectively leaders have improved pupils' progress in writing; and how well leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum which prepares them for their next stage in education.
- You have significantly improved pupils' progress in both reading and mathematics across the school. Progress in both subjects at the end of key stage 2 has been in the top 10% of schools nationally for the last two years. Current attainment information shows that this progress has been maintained.
- The introduction of a reading programme to accelerate progress has rapidly improved pupils' reading ages. This has led to a large proportion of pupils achieving well above the national standard in reading. One parent said, 'The love of reading is encouraged from Reception.' Pupils read both widely and often, and value the support they are given to improve their reading.
- In mathematics, you strive for pupils to reach the highest standards possible. For example, in Year 6, many pupils are taught aspects of the key stage 3 syllabus. Pupils' arithmetic skills are well developed as they are confident in using different calculation methods. Teachers plan challenging problem-solving and reasoning tasks that enable over half the pupils to achieve higher standards in mathematics. Pupils say that mathematics is one of their favourite subjects as they enjoy picking the right level of challenge for themselves.
- The progress of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in writing is improving due to effective staff training that enables pupils to use speech to develop their writing skills. The focus on spelling and the development of word banks have improved accuracy, and increased pupils' use of more complex vocabulary. Teachers plan interesting and fun activities that motivate pupils to write well. For example, in Year 4, pupils enjoyed planning an explanation text on 'The real truth about dishwashers', including the secret that cats actually clean the dishes. Pupils' writing in their literacy lessons is of a high standard and most are making good or better progress. However, writing in other subjects is not of the same high standard.
- Leaders have developed the curriculum well to provide a wide range of learning opportunities. The arts are a strength of the school as specialist teachers are used to develop pupils' skills, particularly in art and music. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 learn a brass instrument and take part in weekly band time. Art, particularly drawing skills, is taught very well and pupils take pride in the work that they produce in their sketchbooks. Pupils have opportunities to develop their skills in a range of different sports both in lessons and through extra-curricular provision. They also regularly participate in tournaments and festivals, such as those for basketball, dance, football and swimming. Pupils also enjoy the trips and drama groups that enrich the curriculum.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the science curriculum, which has improved coverage and progression in skills. Religious education is taught effectively,

building up pupils' understanding of a range of religions as well as tackling 'big' questions such as: 'Why do some people treat animals badly?' Each class has adopted a charity to deepen their understanding of world issues. For example, Year 6 pupils visited the Cardinal Hume Centre to develop their awareness of youth homelessness. Pupils also regularly visit a nearby forest to develop their understanding of how to care for the environment. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next stage in education. Leaders have rightly identified that the teaching of geography is not as strong as other subjects. This aspect of school improvement is under way.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' writing across the curriculum is as effective as in their literacy work
- teachers develop pupils' geographical knowledge and skills more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Mo Galway
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, pupils and members of the governing body and spoke to a representative from the local authority. Together with the headteacher, we visited all year groups. I also reviewed a range of pupils' work with your deputy headteacher. Parents' views were taken into account through the 104 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 83 free-text comments. I also spoke to a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. I observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes, in class and around the school. I reviewed a wide range of the school's documents, including information about pupils' achievement and attendance, the school development plan, and policies and procedures including those for safeguarding. We also discussed the school's self-evaluation.