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David Masters
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Masters

Short inspection of St Margaret Clitherow 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You provide strong and positive leadership. Your determination and ambition inspire pupils, parents, carers and staff alike. You have successfully created a caring and inclusive culture within the school. As one parent commented: 'This is a great school with a family feel. Children are well cared for and enabled to grow – educationally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.' Staff enjoy working at the school. Governors speak of a highly flexible staff team which is committed to fixing any concern that is raised. This view is confirmed by parents. The Frassati Catholic Academy Trust has provided effective support in improving teaching in the school by sharing good practice and expertise.

Pupils love coming to school and this is reflected in their high attendance figures. They are polite and respectful to each other. They listen carefully to their teachers during lessons and work hard. They told me their lessons are fun and that their teachers are kind, supportive and funny. They enjoy many aspects of school life, including 'fit Fridays', inter-house matches and the wide range of after-school clubs on offer.

The inspection report for your predecessor school highlighted several strengths, including outstanding behaviour, high attainment and good progress. These aspects continue to be strong. At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to raise the attainment of the most able pupils in mathematics. Leaders' work to

address this issue has been effective. In 2017, at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils' attainment in mathematics was above the national averages for both the expected standard and the higher standard. However, we agreed that pupils are not always moved on to challenging tasks quickly enough in mathematics in key stage 1.

Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points. Outcomes for these children have rapidly improved recently due to the highly skilled teaching and the strong and effective provision.

Outcomes for the Year 1 phonics screening check were below the national average in 2017. Leaders are aware that there is work to be done to ensure that all teaching of phonics is of the same standard as the good practice in the school.

You and your governors have a sharp view of the school's strengths and you are clear about priorities for future developments. For example, to further improve progress, you have rightly identified that the new tracking and assessment tool needs to be fully embedded so that the starting points of pupils across all areas of the curriculum are better known. You also recognise that teachers' expectations of the quality of writing are not as high in other subjects as they are in English. This is limiting some pupils' progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders make sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Day-to-day routines are secure. Any necessary actions are completed without delay and are followed up in an efficient manner. Leaders ensure that there is timely, ongoing training for staff and governors so that they know how to keep pupils safe. Your ongoing work with external safeguarding agencies means that you make effective use of them when needed.

During the inspection, I identified a discrepancy in the single central record. This oversight was addressed immediately, demonstrating leaders' and administrators' commitment to meeting statutory requirements. Staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire unanimously agreed that pupils are kept safe at the school.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and that their teachers always listen to them if they have a worry. They told me there is not any bullying currently but, if there were, 'adults would sort something out to make it better'. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.

Parents are well informed, for example through regular e-safety updates in newsletters and on the school website. Parents also overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe in school. As one parent wrote: 'St Margaret Clitherow is a lovely, inclusive school where my daughter feels safe, in an environment which is supportive and conducive to learning.'

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed to look at specific aspects of the school's work, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding; the most able pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics; the quality of pupils' learning in reading, including phonics; and the quality of the school's curriculum for promoting high standards.
- The mathematics curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to reason and solve problems, thereby deepening their understanding. In key stage 2 and the early years, assessment is used effectively to identify the precise starting points of pupils, as well as to pinpoint any gaps in learning. The most able pupils in key stage 2 are regularly challenged appropriately. Tasks require them to think logically and apply their skills and knowledge to a range of situations. You recognise, however, the need to increase challenge further in mathematics in key stage 1, as pupils do not routinely make strong progress.
- The progress that pupils made in reading by the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was in line with the national average. However, the progress made by boys was slower than that made by girls. Leaders have responded swiftly to this and have thoroughly reviewed the reading curriculum to ensure that it promotes a love of reading for boys as well as girls. Boys that I spoke to told me that they enjoy reading and that the school librarian regularly recommends interesting books to them. Current assessment information and work in pupils' books show that boys and girls are making similar progress. Reading comprehension is well structured and teaches a wide range of reading skills, including vocabulary development and summarising. However, the teaching of phonics is inconsistent. The subject knowledge of some members of staff is not secure.
- The school makes the most of teachers' subject specialisms and outcomes are of high quality in subjects such as art and design and physical education. As one parent wrote: 'The school has a fantastic drive to keep "health and fitness" as a key focus, which hopefully gives children life-long learning skills for the future.' The science curriculum ensures that pupils have many opportunities to work scientifically, conducting experimental investigations for themselves. Regular enrichment days, such as the recent poetry day themed around William Blake's famous poem 'The Tyger', contribute well to enhancing pupils' learning further.
- Leaders and teachers actively and effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and are preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain. However, teachers do not take pupils' starting points into consideration well enough across the wider curriculum. Tasks set in lessons are not consistently pitched high enough to meet the needs of the most able pupils, limiting their progress at times. Leaders also acknowledge that opportunities to write to a high standard across the wider curriculum are limited.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in key stage 1 are moved swiftly on to more challenging work in mathematics
- phonics is taught to a consistently high standard
- pupils' starting points in subjects across the curriculum are considered more consistently to provide greater challenge, especially to the most able pupils
- the standard of writing across the curriculum is as high as that seen in English lessons.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the Frassati Catholic Academy Trust, the director of education for Portsmouth Catholic Diocese, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bracknell Forest. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we looked at the quality of pupils' work in books. You accompanied me on visits to lessons in all classes to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. I considered 34 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and their free-text comments. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to the staff and pupils' questionnaires were also considered. I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a group of pupils about their school and heard some pupils read. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents were examined, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement planning, pupils' progress information and various school policies.