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Mr Peter Harrison  
Headteacher  
St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School  
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Cumbria  
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Dear Mr Harrison

### **Short inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 15 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 September 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 and your staff continue to provide a harmonious learning community where parents and carers told me that 'Each child is given the opportunity to shine in their own, individual way.'

You, your staff and governors have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. Together, you are determined to improve the school further. You have high expectations of what you can achieve, while being mindful and realistic about staff workloads. As a result, staff morale is high.

At the previous inspection in 2014, inspectors asked the leadership team, including governors, to raise the achievement of all groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics. Your leader of mathematics is relatively new to post, but it is clear from pupils' books that a whole-school approach to mathematics has been adopted. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan activities so that groups and individuals are appropriately challenged. Teachers provide opportunities for real-life problem solving. An example of personalising learning was evident from younger pupils being accompanied to the shops to purchase items. Teachers encouraged pupils to use their mathematical skills to ensure that they were given the correct change.

Inspectors also asked you to strengthen leadership and management even further by developing the school's system for checking the progress of pupils. You have implemented a new tracking system to closely monitor the progress of individual

pupils. All teachers use this system, so that they can provide bespoke support for those who fall behind and more challenge for pupils whose progress is quicker.

You were also asked to improve attendance by working even more closely with parents. You and members of the governing body have continued to take action to improve attendance. Although you have solid evidence of success, particularly with pupils who were reluctant learners at other schools, you continue to work with the few parents who do not help their children to attend regularly enough. You closely monitor the high level of mobility in and out of your school and ensure smooth transitions. Your extensive work with other agencies and the local authority is of a high calibre. You continue to work with the small minority of parents who take their children on extended breaks overseas to attend family celebrations and/or to observe religious festivals.

The vast majority of parents are very appreciative of what they referred to as 'the great staff team' and are really happy with the 'safe and well-managed environment' that their children clearly enjoy. Several parents told me how pleased they are at the progress their children have made in learning the English language, having moved here from abroad. The 'Strength in Diversity' rap, performed by pupils and available on the school's website, is a clear indication of how inclusive this school really is.

Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge and several regularly volunteer to listen to pupils read. The Parent and Friends Association are proactive in organising a range of events, such as the recent Veggie Day. This was an opportunity for families to socialise together during the weekend while enjoying international vegetarian dishes to promote healthy eating. The pupils told me how much they enjoyed performing their hip-hop dances and songs, which parents and governors had also clearly enjoyed watching. Your regular shows and concerts provide opportunities for pupils to work as a team and build their confidence.

Pupils are very proud of their school and they take pride in their work, too. They know what they need to do to improve their work, and are proud of their achievements. Pupils who spoke to me said that teachers make learning fun. The respect they have for each other, and the positive relationships fostered within the school, contribute to the good progress that pupils make in a range of subjects. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education, both academically and in their personal development and resilience.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

As the designated safeguarding leader, you make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children and you check on visitors to the school. You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with regular training that is up to date, so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. Every week in staff meetings, you make sure that

safeguarding is on the agenda to ensure opportunities for updates and discussions. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- As part of this inspection, I looked at how effectively you and your staff are taking action to improve outcomes in the phonics screening check in Year 1. You have invested in a new phonics scheme and now have a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics in Nursery, Reception, key stage 1 and, when necessary, for older pupils. The leader who has responsibility for reading throughout the school ensures that staff have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to teach phonics and reading effectively. Leaders regularly analyse information to identify any pupils who are struggling. They act swiftly to ensure that pupils receive help to catch up quickly, particularly pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, pupils' outcomes in phonics are now stronger than previously. Teachers' and teaching assistants' enthusiasm for phonics is infectious. In the early years, pupils were very excited to learn the 'ee' sound, repeating sentences after the teacher and then writing words on whiteboards. However, we discussed the missed opportunity to reinforce the learning of this new sound while children engaged in activities outdoors later in the morning.
- Next, I explored how a culture of reading is being embedded across the school. Staff have developed a culture that promotes the excitement and anticipation that comes with reading a book from when children start school in the early years. For the younger pupils, you have invested in new books to read in class that match the phonics scheme you are using. However, the books that pupils take home do not always match the phonics phase and are therefore not reinforcing the new sounds being learned in school. You provide opportunities for parents to build their skills in how to help their children with reading at home. You and your staff are vigilant in recognising when pupils are not reading at home and therefore falling behind. Staff and volunteers do as much as they can to plug this gap, but we discussed the need to continue to work with the few parents who do not regularly read at home with their children. Older pupils told me how important it is to become a competent and fluent reader, both for pleasure and to secure jobs when they are older.
- I was also keen to find out how you are supporting pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. As an inclusive school, you work tirelessly to reduce any barriers to learning that pupils may have. For example, pupils have access to a range of opportunities to develop their social and emotional skills in readiness for learning. Parents told me that, at St Cuthbert's, 'Children are able to seek support and find strategies when difficulties arise.' Several parents told me that they have noticed 'a huge change in confidence' since their children moved to this school. Your special educational needs coordinator is thorough in diagnosing particular needs of pupils. She works closely with staff to reduce barriers to learning and to provide appropriate support within school and/or with external agencies. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points and they, and their

families, have a high calibre of support.

- Finally, I looked at the opportunities pupils have to develop a love of learning across the wider curriculum. Pupils told me how much they enjoy all aspects of school life and this was clear to see during the course of the inspection. Teachers plan learning opportunities which broaden pupils' horizons and raise pupils' aspirations. For example, teachers organise a residential trip for older pupils to an outdoor education centre where pupils are encouraged to try new experiences and build on their teamwork skills. A visiting musician teaches younger pupils to play the recorder and older pupils to play the flute. Staff 'go the extra mile' in providing after-school, extra-curricular activities such as golf, ukulele, dance and many inter-school sporting competitions. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to learn about how to care for their local environment and celebrate the diverse community of which they are a part.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers accelerate the progress pupils make in phonics by providing more opportunities to reinforce new sounds through activities beyond phonics sessions
- the books younger pupils take home are well matched to the phonics sounds and letters that pupils are learning
- they build on strategies to work with the few parents who need to develop their confidence and skills to help their children develop a love of reading beyond school.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, we jointly observed teaching and learning. I held meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, members of the governing body and with you in your role as the designated safeguarding leader. I analysed 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I also took account of 12 free-text responses from parents. I analysed the nine staff responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and I spoke to several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaktimes and in lessons. I also analysed the eight responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; and pupils' work and their reading logs.