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Mrs Sara Benn
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Benn

Short inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 November 2013.

The school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the previous 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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection.

Since becoming headteacher, you have led the school from strength to strength and brought about significant improvement since the previous inspection. You have high aspirations for staff and pupils alike and this is reflected in the high quality of education the school provides. Parents appreciate how well the school promotes their children's personal as well as their academic development. This was reflected in the comment made by one parent, who wrote about her daughter's education: 'They cover every aspect of her emotional, educational and social well-being, the unity and inclusion they show to every child makes me proud to say she attends Holy Family School.'

You have restructured the leadership team to give all leaders a greater part to play in developing the school. You recognise the talents and skills in your staff by giving them a voice to shape the vision and direction of the school. This has created a model of distributed leadership, one in which all staff report that they are proud to be a member of Holy Family Primary School. You have increased the number of specialist teachers for some subjects, including French and information technology

(IT), to enhance the curriculum. The rich curriculum provided for pupils is a real strength of the school. Work in classrooms and on display around the school reflects the depth and breadth of the wide range of subjects that pupils study. Subjects such as history are brought vividly to life through practical activities, visits to places of interest and visitors who bring in their expertise. For example, last term, pupils in Year 4 visited the Verulamium Museum in St Albans. They designed and created shields, as well as having a Roman day to learn about the Romans and how they have influenced our own lives today.

You have built on the previously good teaching to secure teaching that is consistently strong across the school and this has led to rapid improvements to pupils' outcomes. Leaders, including the early years leader, keep a careful track of pupils' achievements so that support can be targeted as soon as needs are identified. In recent years, leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching writing and this has brought about significant improvement across the school. The quality of pupils' writing across all subjects is impressive. One of the particular strengths that parents and governors recognise is the strong partnership between the school, the parish and the local community that you have strengthened.

Pupils love their school. They are very proud that they have classmates from different parts of the world. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to learn from and gain insight into each other's beliefs, faiths and cultures. They feel equally valued and consequently value each other for the uniqueness of every individual.

In classrooms, on the playground and as they move around the school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They have very positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. Pupils appreciate the care and guidance provided by their teachers and they know that they are in safe hands. Pupils are very friendly and polite and show respect towards each other and their teachers. They listen to each other in class and readily contribute to classroom discussion. Consequently, there is a tangible buzz of learning around the school.

Since the last inspection, you have introduced a new feedback and marking policy so pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to make decisions about their work and to work independently. Pupils' progress has improved year on year and, in the 2017 national assessments, was significantly above average in reading and mathematics. The school's own current assessment information shows that this is likely to rise further this year, including pupils' progress in writing, which was average in 2017.

Teaching is strong across all year groups. This is because all staff have high expectations and plan work that motivates and challenges pupils. Teachers ensure that work builds securely on what has previously been learned so pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding. Parents acknowledge the strengths of teaching. One parent commented, 'Holy Family is a fantastic school with amazing, inspiring and creative teaching.'

Despite the many strengths of the school, you are not complacent. You know that

some of the most able pupils could be further challenged in mathematics at key stage 1 by giving them the opportunity to work with numbers beyond 100 when appropriate. You are also aware that some teachers in key stage 2 are over-cautious when assessing pupils' writing. This means that the quality of writing in pupils' books is often at a higher standard than that shown in the school's performance data.

Safeguarding is effective

Keeping pupils safe has a very high profile within the school. All staff and governors receive regular training and know exactly what to do should a concern be raised that a pupil may be at risk from harm. You ensure that staff follow all procedures and school records are thorough and fit for purpose. Leaders carry out detailed risk analyses for activities such as trips and residential visits to minimise potential risks to pupils and staff. All staff, governors, volunteers and visitors are meticulously checked before they work in the school. Parents are pleased with the new systems to keep pupils safe. They report that their children are happy and safe in school and that they are well cared for.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and say that they feel safe in school. They point to the high-quality care provided by adults. Pupils are confident that adults listen to their concerns and take these concerns seriously. One pupil said of teachers, 'If I could say one thing it would be "Thank you for looking after us."' Pupils know about bullying but say that it rarely happens. They know about the possible dangers related to modern technology and that it is unwise to provide personal information when using computers and mobile phones. They have been taught about other aspects of personal safety through assemblies and the curriculum. There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school.

Inspection findings

- Owing to actions taken by senior leaders, the quality of pupils' writing is strong across the school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the wide range of opportunities they have to write. This is largely because teachers provide them with interesting topics to write about. By Year 3, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have a comprehensive grasp of basic skills that enables them to write neatly, using spelling and punctuation accurately. Because they are exposed to high-quality texts and literature, pupils have developed a wide vocabulary that they use effectively to write fluently and confidently. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make rapid and sustained progress in writing across all year groups. The presentation of pupils' work in their English books and topic books is of high quality.
- The rich and deep curriculum provides pupils with plenty of occasions to practise and extend their writing skills in a range of subjects. In turn, this helps to increase their vocabulary and understanding of different purposes for writing. Pupils show stamina by writing extensively across all subjects, including religious education, science and history. They have a clear understanding of purpose when writing and are aware of the audience that they are writing for. Older pupils not

only show enthusiasm but also a depth of emotion as they write about a situation from another's point of view. For example, pupils in Year 5 wrote a diary entry based on a character who killed his dog in the mistaken belief that the dog had harmed his baby. Pupils demonstrated empathy as they found words to convey the character's distress.

- The school's assessment information shows that boys begin school with skills and levels of development that are below those of girls. Senior leaders have taken action to close this gap but it takes some pupils a long time to catch up. Leaders have reorganised the curriculum to provide more activities and experiences to engage boys more actively in their learning. For example, in the Reception classes, there are activities that allow children to dig and look for bugs. The outdoor area has been carefully planned to allow children to write outside as well as when inside the classroom. This has helped to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' attainment by the end of Year 2.
- The most recent performance information shows that boys' attainment in reading and mathematics is very close to that of girls. However, work in pupils' books shows that some of the most able pupils in Year 2 could be provided with additional challenge, for example by working with numbers beyond 100. Boys remain a little behind girls in writing in younger year groups. As pupils move through the school, the gap rapidly closes and, by the end of Year 6, there is very little difference between the attainment and progress of girls and boys.
- The final aspect of the school's work that we agreed to review was the extent to which the school makes use of performance information to pinpoint specific weaknesses. The deputy headteacher has built on and developed the previous assessment system and now performance information is used effectively by staff to identify strengths and weaknesses. All staff are held to account for pupils' learning and progress and governors hold senior leaders to account for standards across the school. Subject leaders produce a 'standards report' to share with governors showing the strengths within their subject and actions they intend to take to rectify any weaknesses. All staff have been trained to analyse data so they can pinpoint, at an early stage, those pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Assessment information for pupils currently in school shows that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make equally strong progress. Regular pupils' progress meetings are held to ensure that all pupils are on track to achieve as well as they can. These meetings involve looking at pupils' performance information together with work in pupils' books. The quality of pupils' writing is often at a higher level than the assessment judgements recorded by the teacher. This is because teachers, particularly those in year groups other than Years 2 and 6, sometimes lack confidence when recording their assessments as there are no national comparisons for them to moderate against. As a result, the deputy headteacher is to provide more opportunities for teachers in all year groups to moderate pupils' writing in school and with other local schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in all year groups have a wide range of opportunities to moderate their assessments of pupils' writing, both in school and with teachers from other local schools
- pupils are provided with further challenge in mathematics by having opportunities to work with numbers beyond 100 when it is appropriate to do so.

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 Slough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed teaching, learning and assessment across all year groups and I looked at work in pupils' books. I met with you and other senior leaders to discuss your evaluation of the school's performance and your plans for further improvement. I met with governors and a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised a number of documents, including pupils' performance information and records relating to safeguarding. I spoke to pupils informally as well as formally to seek their views about the school. I considered the views of parents by speaking informally to parents during the inspection and by analysing 89 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also looked at the many free-text comments made by parents. I took the views of staff into account by analysing 43 responses to the staff survey.