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Mr Michael Boland  
Headteacher  
St Lewis Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mr Boland

### **Short inspection of St Lewis Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 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 June 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming learning environment, centred on the school's core values of respect, courtesy, ambition and determination, is evident throughout St Lewis. You have successfully created a culture in which you support and value every individual as a learner.

This is a school where leaders know each individual pupil's needs and abilities. As a result, all pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are well supported to achieve. One parent described St Lewis as 'inclusive and really supportive'. Another parent said, 'Each child is treated as an individual.'

The ambition that you and other leaders have for pupils is evident in the improvements you have made. You have developed a team of aspirational and committed senior and middle leaders. You and your leadership team have a very clear understanding of what the school does well, and you are taking effective steps to address what needs to be improved further. The senior leadership team is bringing about improvements in a systematic and planned way. Subject leaders are developing a good and clear understanding of how to monitor and improve those areas for which they have leadership responsibility. They are well supported by you in developing their leadership roles. They value the support, training and opportunities which you give them. This is still at an early stage of development though, and we agreed that they still need to develop their role in school improvement.

Together, you and your team have developed a curriculum that inspires pupils. Therefore,

the majority of pupils are challenged and motivated to take advantage of the extensive range of learning opportunities that deepen their thinking skills and broaden their knowledge. Even more, though, could be done to challenge the most able pupils to ensure that they reach the very highest levels of achievement of which they are capable, in particular in writing and mathematics.

Governors are actively involved in the school and make regular visits to review how well leaders are addressing school improvement priorities. They make effective use of external reports to validate leaders' judgements. Governors know the school well and are highly committed to supporting your shared vision of educating children through a rich educational experience. However, although they are supportive, they also challenge school leaders when they believe the school can do even better.

At the time of the previous inspection, the inspector recognised the many strengths of the school and identified some areas for improvement. The previous inspection report recommended that the school should provide pupils with more opportunities to write across a range of subjects and that teachers should have consistently high expectations for presentation.

Training provided for all staff has led to improvements in their teaching of writing. Pupils are provided with a good range of purposes for writing, from letters to you about their ideas on how to improve St Lewis, to using picture books to explore character and story development. Teachers remind pupils of grammar, punctuation and spelling rules in all subject areas when pupils are asked to write. They make effective use of opportunities to develop language related to topics. While 2017 data shows that progress in writing is not yet as strong as progress in reading and mathematics, the quality of the writing work seen in books was of a very high standard. Presentation of work across a range of subjects was also of a very high quality. However, you are not complacent, and writing remains a key focus for improvement for your school.

You were also asked to make sure that learning is always effective for children in the early years, especially when not supported by adults. You have made significant improvements in the quality of the early years. You have invested in developing your outdoor areas, staff training, assessment processes and leadership. As a result of your hard work, the early years is now a strength. The outdoor environment is stimulating and engaging. Children are well catered for and learn effectively through both adult-led and independent activity.

The parents and carers I spoke to told me they are encouraged to raise any issue, however small, and know it will be dealt with quickly. They value the emphasis that leaders place on promoting children's well-being and the additional support that is given to children when necessary. One parent said, 'My child has been supported academically with high expectations, but he also needed a lot of emotional support. He has been really well supported as a child and we have also been really supported as family.' While this is the view of the majority of parents, a number feel that the school could do more to support the most able pupils in the school and that communication between the school and parents could be improved even further.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They behave well in lessons and around school. They are

polite to each other and to adults alike. They listen courteously to each other's ideas in class. The strong relationships between staff and pupils support the purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. In all the classes I visited, pupils were keen to answer questions. They worked hard with focus and determination in even the most challenging of activities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding records comply with all statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. The single central record of checks on the suitability of staff is maintained to a high standard. I scrutinised case studies, and these demonstrate how the school has taken decisive action to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils. The governors, including the designated safeguarding governors, work hard to ensure that safeguarding is effective. Training is kept up to date and ensures that staff have a good awareness of issues within and outside the school community.

Pupils told me how they keep safe online and said that they all feel safe in school. Leaders have made good links with parents as well as external agencies to enable them to support vulnerable pupils effectively. Pupils said that behaviour is at least good in the school and that instances of bullying are rare. This is because of the strong pastoral care and support systems that exist in the school. As one pupil I spoke to commented on behaviour, 'Teachers deal with it really well.'

### **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on key lines of enquiry, which we agreed. The first of these was looking at how well writing is taught across the school. You have embarked on a programme of significant improvement of the writing curriculum throughout the school. This has been backed up by improvements to the way that leaders undertake checks on teaching quality. This process is now more in depth than in the past and takes account of pupils' progress over time. Crucially, it is focused on the quality of teaching and its impact on learning and how both can be improved. These changes are all having a positive impact on pupils' experience, confidence and outcomes in writing. Evidence in books and during lessons shows that pupils are completing more complex and challenging writing activities across a range of subjects.
- We looked at pupils' writing in every class in the school. You have introduced a wide range of effective techniques to raise pupils' attainment in writing. You and your senior leaders have analysed assessment information well. You have worked effectively with staff to ensure that they know how to identify pupils' next steps accurately in order to improve their writing skills.
- The writing we saw throughout the school was of a consistent high quality. Pupils spoke positively about how their teachers help them think about how they could improve the quality of their written work. In Year 6, for example, pupils wrote with expression using complex vocabulary and descriptive language to describe life as a castaway on an island.
- In key stage 2, pupils learn to develop their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. The school has placed an emphasis on building these skills in recent years. Throughout

the school and across the curriculum, pupils write in a wide range of genres. Pupils were using resources such as dictionaries, thesauruses and word banks to extend their vocabulary. While the writing we saw was of a high quality, progress in writing is still not as strong as progress in reading and in mathematics over time.

- We agreed to look at how teaching is ensuring that most-able pupils are making good or better progress across the school. This was because, while progress in reading, writing and mathematics was consistently above national averages at the end of key stage 2, progress for the most able was more variable over time. You are aware of this and have worked to ensure better progress for most-able pupils. Pupils I heard read, scrutiny of the school's own data, observations in lessons and work in books showed that reading and mathematics are becoming strengths of the school. Teachers set challenging work and have high expectations of all pupils throughout the school.
- Previous results in 2016 and 2017 showed that progress in mathematics and in writing for most-able pupils did not match that of progress in reading. You have rightly focused on this as a key area for development. You and your governing body are concentrating much of your monitoring on this area. While this is starting to improve outcomes for most-able pupils, there is still more to do in ensuring that all teaching is enabling them to make consistently good progress over time.
- We also agreed to look at the quality of education in the early years. This was because it was an area for development in the previous inspection. Children enter the Reception Year with a wide range of abilities. Overall, children start school with levels of skill that are around those typical for their age. They make good progress in their reading, writing and numeracy skills, and a large majority reach age-related expectations by the time they leave the Reception Year. Many children exceed age-related expectations by the end of their time in Reception.
- Through creative planning based on children's interests, early years staff ensure that pupils are well motivated by their learning experiences. The opportunities for early reading and writing are relevant and varied. Early years staff support learning by engaging, with interest, in meaningful discussion with children. They question children well to extend their learning and initiate new ideas. They have worked hard to create a highly stimulating and engaging environment and provide children with many opportunities to work independently. Early years is now a strength of your school.
- Although leaders of subjects other than mathematics, reading and writing are highly able and enthusiastic, they have not fully developed the process of evaluating their subject areas. They know their subjects well and have ambitious plans for developing them. However, some work is still to be done in helping them assess standards in their subjects, set realistic goals and plan effectively for improvements across the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils continue to be challenged to improve their writing skills so that a larger proportion go on to achieve at greater depth
- the level of progress of the most able pupils continues to improve in mathematics and

writing

- the skills of middle leaders are further developed to enable them to take a full part in bringing about improvement in their areas of responsibility.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Tonge  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, a group of governors and staff. I met with a representative of the local authority and the diocese and spoke with your school improvement partner. I observed pupils around the school and in their classes. Together, we visited all the classes, observed teaching and learning, looked at books and spoke to pupils about their work. I also met with six pupils to seek their views of the school. I listened to three pupils read. I met parents at the start of the school day. I took account of the 23 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including free-text responses, 34 responses to the pupils' survey and nine responses to the staff survey.