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Mrs Carolyn Baker  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Baker

### **Short inspection of Corpus Christi RC Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 October 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 March 2012.

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

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

You lead a strong leadership team which is focused and works hard to ensure that pupils are safe, settled and make good progress. You and your staff have created an attractive, welcoming setting and have established a positive learning culture which extends throughout the school. This is reflected in the views of pupils and parents.

Pupils are proud of their school. They talked with enthusiasm about the work of their teachers and the school council. They were keen to tell me about the benefits of being a 'Global Learning' school. Parents with whom I spoke were almost unanimous in their praise for the school. One parent said, 'I couldn't put into words how good this school is. It is very much part of the community', while another spoke of the 'fantastic support' it provides for parents. These views were reinforced by the small number of parents who responded on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Governors were also keen to describe the school's strengths and said that Corpus Christi is the 'heart' of the local community.

You provide determined and astute leadership and are held in high regard by a highly motivated staff team. Your self-evaluation summary, and that of the early years leader, identifies accurately what is working well and what needs further improvement.

Most children enter your school with skills and abilities that are considerably lower

than those typically seen for their age. Many have limited language skills. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is exceptionally high. As a result of good teaching, pupils across the school, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress from their very low starting points. However, at the end of Year 6 standards of attainment are below the national average. You know that further increasing the proportion of pupils that reach the expected or higher standards by the end of key stages 1 and 2, particularly in mathematics, remains an important next step.

Following your last inspection, you were tasked to improve the rate of progress of children in the early years and into Year 1. Considerable work has been carried out to improve early years provision. You correctly identified that effective language acquisition was key to children's good progress. Weekly meetings to check and review children's work mean that any children with gaps in their learning are identified and supported. The early years leader has worked hard and effectively to provide training for parents. Increasingly, children are being supported at home. Since the last inspection the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased, although it is still below the national average.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have established policies and practice that are effective, fit for purpose and are tailored well to reflect the nature of the community the school serves. Safeguarding records are appropriately detailed and of high quality and all checks for the recruitment of staff are in place. As the designated safeguarding leader, you have a comprehensive knowledge of children at risk and have established strong and productive links with outside agencies and families.

Attendance, which has been a concern in the past, is assiduously monitored by senior leaders and administrative staff. The school works closely with the local authority and families and, as a result, overall attendance has improved, although it is still marginally lower than the national average for primary schools.

Pupils said that they feel safe at school. They described behaviour as good. They say that incidents of bullying are 'rare' and agreed that if they saw any bullying they would, 'tell a teacher and it would be sorted out in less than five minutes!' Pupils talked confidently about staying safe online, 'stranger danger' and road safety. They were keen to explain the role of the elected school council, which regularly discusses ideas to ensure that their peers stay safe and happy. Pupils recently delivered an assembly dealing with cyber bullying and what to do if you are victim. Pupils agreed that they would have no hesitation going to a teacher if they were concerned about anything.

## **Inspection findings**

- My first key line of enquiry related to mathematics. This was because provisional results of national tests and teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2018 indicate that standards in mathematics have fallen and are below average. In both of these key stages, too few pupils reached the expected or higher standards. I wanted to check, therefore, whether pupils are making good progress in mathematics and what is being done to reverse this dip. You and your mathematics leader are clear about the improvement that is needed and have already introduced a number of strategies to improve teaching and outcomes. A new mathematics scheme has been introduced and a mathematics consultant is working with parents of early years children. There is now an increased emphasis on competence using the four rules of number. Any pupil falling behind is quickly identified and increased support is being provided. In key stage 2, mathematics lessons are now better structured and contain greater challenge. Additional time during the school day has been allocated to allow pupils to practise their mathematical skills. School records, along with my observations of teaching and analysis of pupils' work, indicate that mathematics is well taught and pupils are making good progress from their starting points. A higher proportion of pupils currently in Year 6, for example, are on track to reach the expected and higher standard than previously. Even so, across the school standards of attainment in mathematics still fall short of the national average.
- In writing, overall, pupils achieve well. The improvement of writing has been a recent focus for development across the school. Much work has been carried out to improve the teaching of writing. Provisional results at the end of Year 6 in 2018 indicate that your efforts are paying off. Attainment at the end of key stage 2 improved dramatically and most pupils reached the standard expected for their age. During the inspection, pupils in key stage 1 were observed writing short letters and newspaper reports. Pupils talked confidently about what they need to do to write a good report. They show positive attitudes towards their learning. My review of English, topic and 'Global Citizen' books showed that pupils are offered a good range of opportunities to write for different purposes. However, in recent years, the standard of boys' writing by the end of Year 6 has fallen some way behind that of the girls. This was also evident in the books that I viewed. Closing this gap is an aspect that the school needs to address.
- Another line of enquiry focused on checking whether the quality of provision in early years enables children to make a good start to learning. This is because the proportion of children achieving a good level of development, although higher than at the time of the last inspection, remains below average. Inspection evidence indicates that nearly all children enter the Nursery with very low levels of language and social skills. From such low starting points, children do make good progress. Carousels of activities, both inside and outside, place an increasingly strong emphasis on the development and use of language skills. Children are well taught. Learning is closely linked to the needs of individual children. Adult-led teaching is highly focused but, at the same time, good opportunities are provided for children to play and learn independently. Staff are working hard to involve more parents to help improve children's language, and numeracy, skills. During the inspection, a large number of parents attended an early years 'stay and play' session. The good quality of provision in early years

has been recognised recently in the achievement of the Early Years Quality Mark.

- You and your staff have worked hard to develop a broad, balanced, rich and contemporary curriculum and there is no doubt that it enriches and motivates pupils. Pupils were enthusiastic about their learning and were eager to tell me about the many visits linked to their topics. Being a 'Global Learning' school, for example, means that pupils engage with the wider world and focus on issues such as poverty, migration, gender equality, human rights and the work of inspirational world leaders both past and present. Opportunities to develop pupils' reading and writing skills have been effectively woven into all topics. Displays around the school show the richness and diversity of the curriculum and challenge pupils to think about the world outside of their local community with questions about the plight of refugees, the futility of war and the challenges of life in Victorian Britain.
- You have done a great deal to improve attendance and to prevent persistent absence. Attendance is analysed and monitored on a weekly basis and engagement with parents has been increased, with the result that overall attendance is now close to the national average. Pupils were keen to explain the benefits of good attendance and the pride they feel when receiving the weekly attendance trophy for their class and individual awards.
- You have good reason to feel proud of the recently established nurture group and correctly identify it as a strength of your provision. This has addressed the needs of the most vulnerable pupils in Years 1 and 2 effectively and it provides them with the confidence and skills needed to cope successfully with the demands of school life.
- While pupils make good progress in all key stages across the school, the achievement of the most able pupils is sometimes hampered because work is not always challenging enough. Very few pupils reach the higher standard by the end of Year 2 or Year 6. This is particularly the case in writing and in mathematics. You know that increasing the proportion of pupils that reach the higher standard is an important next step to address.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the focus on improving pupils' attainment in mathematics in both key stage 1 and 2 is maintained, so that it is in line with national averages
- the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standard by the end of key stages 1 and 2 is increased, especially in writing and mathematics
- the achievement of boys in writing across the school improves so that it is in line with that of the girls.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Middlesbrough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Middlesbrough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Knowles  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I looked specifically at attainment and progress in mathematics, early years provision, pupils' achievement in writing, attendance and the wider curriculum.

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, your school business manager, the early years leader, the subject leader for mathematics and the chair, and vice-chair, of the governing body. I also held a meeting with your school adviser and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, assessment data and visit notes from a recent review. I spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the day and considered 11 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with two groups of pupils from a range of year groups. The first group discussed safeguarding, behaviour and the curriculum with me. The second group talked about reading and I listened to them all read. You and I visited all classes together and observed teaching and learning in writing and mathematics. We also briefly visited a phonics session for Year 1 pupils. At the end of the morning, we spent time in the recently established nurture unit. During the afternoon, I carried out a scrutiny of pupils' written work and topic work from most year groups. I also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online surveys of pupil and staff views.