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Mrs Susan O'Reilly  
Headteacher  
St Agnes RC School  
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Dear Mrs O'Reilly

### **Short inspection of St Agnes RC School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 October 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last 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 section 5 inspection.

St Agnes Catholic Primary School is a caring and warm community, where pupils are very happy and engaged in their learning. You and your leaders ensure that pupils have a very positive start to their education. The ethos of the school reflects the values of learning and growing together, highlighted in your mission statement. We saw adults and pupils working very positively together during the inspection.

Leaders know the school well. They have very high expectations and set challenging targets for pupils and staff. Leaders and teachers are clear that they want pupils to continuously improve and achieve their best. Working collaboratively, they ensure that pupils have the best opportunities to gain knowledge and develop key skills in all areas of their learning.

From early years onwards pupils learn very well and are enthusiastic about their learning. In all of the learning activities we saw, pupils worked very well together and were fully focused on their work. They were very keen to answer questions and showed a genuine interest in the topics they were learning.

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, conveyed very positive views about the school. The parents I spoke with in the playground were highly positive about their children's experience in the school. One parent commented, 'This is a fantastic place. My children always love coming to school.'

Governors have a very good understanding of areas of improvement for the school. They are committed to their clearly defined roles. This is particularly demonstrated in their systematic visits to monitor aspects of the school's work.

The celebration of diversity and languages represented in the school is taken seriously and has been developed very well since the previous inspection. For example, 'The World of St Agnes' was created collaboratively by parents and pupils to celebrate the community's different backgrounds. This helps prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. The school promotes mutual respect. Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and adults.

## **Safeguarding**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As designated safeguarding lead you have ensured that leaders, including governors, and staff know and understand their responsibilities and the role they have in safeguarding pupils' welfare. Staff and governors are very well trained on a regular basis. This includes training on female genital mutilation and the 'Prevent' duty.

There is a robust recruitment process that includes systematic checks on staff. The school is committed to keeping children safe and has a thorough policy which is implemented effectively, with the school working closely with external agencies. Staff maintain the highest regard for children's safety beyond the school on trips which are planned with rigorous risk assessments.

In discussions in the playground, and in response to Ofsted's online survey, parents conveyed that their children feel safe. Parents particularly told me that their children felt safe because the behaviour in the school was very good and pupils were happy in their learning. Pupils I spoke with told me that they felt safe in school. They said that there are always adults available to look after them. Their feelings of being safe were summarised by one pupil who said, 'This is a kind place to be.'

## **Inspection findings**

- We agreed that my first line of enquiry would focus on teaching in key stage 1 and whether this enables pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, to fully develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics in order to achieve the expected standards. This was because in the previous year the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining the expected standards was below the national average.

- Provisional outcomes for 2018 suggest that the vast majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, met the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Current pupils make very strong progress across the school. In the early years, children develop strong initial skills that prepare them very well for Year 1. Children are excited to develop new skills, including in their writing, because of carefully planned opportunities.
- During our visit to key stage 1 classrooms we saw pupils working enthusiastically. They enjoyed solving problems and collaborated well with their partners when they were asked to discuss their first thoughts. Pupils are guided to become more independent in their learning as they progress through the school. They spoke confidently about how they individually choose 'cool, spicy or hot' activities in mathematics. As a result, pupils make strong progress in their mathematics.
- There are many opportunities for key stage 1 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to progress well across the curriculum. Pupils further develop their reading and writing skills in geography, science and design topics. This helps them to move quickly from writing words and phrases to sentences.
- My second line of enquiry considered the effectiveness of the school's work in monitoring the teaching of reading and writing of key stage 2 pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. In previous years, key stage 2 pupils had made more progress in mathematics than in reading and writing.
- The standard of writing across key stage 2 is high. Pupils are proud of their writing, and the presentation of their work is exemplary. Regular feedback from teachers helps pupils improve their work. For example, pupils in Year 6 improved the structure of their sentences and paragraphs to make their writing more purposeful.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their use of language in their writing. For example, pupils used descriptive language to convey the emotions of characters from a text. Pupils speak with clarity about their experiences of reading and how this helps them to improve their writing.
- Leaders monitor pupils' learning and progress closely in reading and writing. They also check the impact that new initiatives are having on learning. For example, a new reading initiative led to pupils reading more books of a higher standard and enthusiastically completing a quiz about each book. This has resulted in improved outcomes in reading for all groups of pupils. However, middle leaders' monitoring and evaluations are not yet fully developed to sustain improvements.
- My final line of enquiry looked at how well subjects across the key stage 2 curriculum contribute to pupils' progress in reading and writing, including for disadvantaged pupils and the most able. This is because in 2017 key stage 2 pupils' progress in reading and writing was not as strong as their progress in mathematics.
- Pupils write to a high standard across all subjects. Pupils are able to apply their learning from English to write in depth in their topic work. Within their written work, pupils use technical language and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subjects. In topic lessons, pupils have opportunities to develop their note-taking skills in preparation for extended writing. This helps

pupils to include more technical vocabulary in their writing. However, opportunities for pupils' development of reading across the curriculum are not as well developed as those for writing.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are enhanced opportunities across the curriculum to support the progress of reading
- middle leaders build upon their work together to share strengths and expertise to continue to sustain improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Janice Howkins  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, three middle leaders, two teachers, and the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. I made joint visits to lessons with you. I held formal discussions with groups of pupils, as well as talking to parents in the playground. I took account of 76 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. A range of the school's documentation was considered, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation. I reviewed safeguarding checks, policies and procedures, and information about attendance and exclusions.