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Mr Christopher Power
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Power

Short inspection of Barkston Ash Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 December 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 be a section 5 inspection.

You know your school exceptionally well. Your regular self-evaluation is used to carefully select priorities and actions that result in ongoing school improvement. You carry out regular, thorough checks on teaching and learning across the school. These actions have helped to maintain and improve high levels of attainment and progress across the school.

Leaders have worked relentlessly to address the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. You and your staff take the time to get to know your pupils extremely well. In lessons, adults use targeted questioning particularly well to provide support and challenge for groups and individuals. Together you have identified a group of vulnerable pupils. You work as a team to provide them with support both academically and pastorally to ensure that they continue to make good progress.

The school is very calm and orderly. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons, on the playground and around school. They are confident, well mannered and polite. They

respond resiliently to challenge. Attitudes to learning are exemplary. Attendance rates for all groups of pupils are above the national average and persistent absence is well below the national average.

Pupils enjoy all that school life has to offer. They speak with enthusiasm about different subjects and topics they have studied. They value the support and challenge that adults give them and know that they are always expected to do their best. They fully embrace opportunities to take on extra responsibilities as school council representatives, prefects, monitors and peer mentors. Each child in Reception has a Year 6 buddy to welcome them into the school family and to support them through their first year in school. Pupils can apply to be part of the 'Mini Vinnies' group. The group 'turn concern into action' by, among other things, supporting class charities, writing to the housebound of the parish, entertaining residents at the local care home, and organising the school foodbank.

Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school. They spoke and wrote at length about the work that the 'fantastic staff' do to make sure that pupils make strong academic progress. They are even more pleased with the caring ethos of the school and with the impact of the work that the school does to develop the 'whole child' through work on pupils' social, moral and spiritual development. Parents say that staff are very approachable and always listen to any concerns that they have, no matter how small. They particularly enjoy being invited to attend assembly each Friday, where pupils' successes are celebrated.

Staff are proud to be part of this school and enjoy working here. They value the way that leaders use training, mentoring and advice to encourage, challenge and support their professional development. They recently received a national award that recognised how they work with pupils to support their local community.

Governors value and make good use of the information that they receive in your reports and gain from their visits to school. They know the strengths of the school and are involved in identifying areas for development. The impact that school improvement actions have on pupils is carefully monitored and leaders are challenged to maintain high levels of attainment and progress. Governors support the school by being actively involved in the recruitment of staff and through their support for enrichment activities.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. All staff and governors are well trained and have a thorough understanding of their role in keeping all pupils safe. They know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Although incidents are rare, staff are diligent in their approach, making sure that all concerns are logged and that actions are taken in a timely manner.

Parents say that they know that their children are in safe hands in school and praise the work that the school does to maintain a strong, caring ethos. They have no

concerns about bullying and know that the school will listen if they ever have any concerns.

Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they will be supported if they ever have any worries. They are confident that work done in school has given them age-appropriate skills to keep themselves safe when crossing roads or using the internet. Pupils speak with pride about the skills they are taught in first aid from the age of seven.

Inspection findings

- Pupils take care and pride in the layout and presentation of their work. This can be seen in all age groups, across a range of subjects. Pupils are keen to receive feedback about their work from their teachers and most respond well.
- Children in early years are given lots of encouragement and direction to write, regularly and independently. They have opportunities to write for real purposes, such as making signs to make sure that their ladybird houses would not be disturbed by the gardeners and replying to letters from 'The Light Fairy'. Adults encourage correct letter formation and praise children's attempts to apply phonics knowledge to independently spell words and phrases.
- Subject leaders are well supported to carry out their roles. They receive training and have opportunities to work with other schools to share ideas and expertise. They regularly carry out lesson observations with senior leaders and scrutinise pupils' work. This enables them to check the quality of teaching and how well pupils learn in all subjects of the curriculum. This leads to teachers being given useful advice and support to make their teaching even more effective.
- The school has a rich curriculum that is carefully tailored to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Pupils study a wide range of subjects in depth and have many opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in real contexts. The curriculum is enriched by a wealth of interesting activities that engage and enthuse pupils. Pupils have many opportunities to learn through educational visits to museums, places of worship and theatres. Theme weeks and days are used to raise awareness and deepen pupils' understanding. Learning is made memorable by setting it in real contexts. For example, the 'Apprenticeship Scheme' requires pupils to be creative and write plans to develop a product, to produce accounts and to market and present their ideas. Pupils raise considerable amounts of money from this scheme, which they use to fund a range of projects including reward trips, supporting a child in Togo and contributing to community projects.
- The early years learning environment is well organised and is highly stimulating. Adults take every opportunity to extend children's learning through thoughtful provision of resources, questioning and challenging activities. Every child is treated as an individual and staff work diligently to identify and remove barriers to learning. As a result, children make significant progress from their starting points in all areas of learning. However, recent changes to the way this progress is measured are yet to be fully embedded.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- each individual is provided with exactly the right level of challenge and support
- recent improvements in how children's skills and knowledge are assessed when they start school and their progress through early years become embedded.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I made visits to all classes with you. I met with the early years leader and looked at work in books with the leaders for English and mathematics. I met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with a representative from the local authority.

I talked to several parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day and took account of the 85 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I met with a group of staff and took account of the five responses to the Ofsted staff survey. I talked informally with pupils in lessons, met formally with a group of pupils, and took account of the 75 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document, minutes of governing body meetings, records of the checks on teaching and learning, school assessment information, and attendance and safeguarding documentation.