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Miss Angela McCann  
Headteacher  
St Alphonsus' RC Primary School  
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TS3 6PX

Dear Miss McCann

### **Short inspection of St Alphonsus' RC Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders at all levels, including the executive team of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust and members of the local management board, lead the school with a determination that all children can, and will, succeed. Together, you have created a school which is firmly rooted in its Christian values of learning, serving and loving. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They appreciate the support given to them by the staff and say this helps them with their learning. One pupil said, 'The teachers are amazing, wonderful and kind, they help us if we are stuck.'

You and your staff provide an exciting and nurturing education for pupils. Members of your leadership team are proactive in their areas of responsibility. They plan actions, lead training and monitor the impact of their work. This is leading to further improvements in pupils' progress. You have established a committed staff team who work collegiately to ensure that pupils are supported effectively and thoughtfully. Staff value the positive changes that have taken place since the school's last inspection. They are proud to work at the school and their morale is high.

Children make a strong start to their time in school in your early years unit. The proportion of pupils who are working at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' progress in key stage 2 is in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. You have high numbers of pupils who arrive and

leave the school at times other than those expected, some who speak English as an additional language. You support pupils who are new to English well. For example, you have appointed a member of staff to help them begin to learn English and have trained pupils as 'young interpreters'. This helps pupils who are new to English to feel welcome and part of the school community.

Pupils are polite, well-mannered and enjoy learning. In all lessons we observed, pupils were fully engaged in their work. They work together well. We saw examples in pupils' books of them helping each other to improve their writing. All of the pupils that I spoke to were unanimous in their praise for the school and the support their teachers give them. The majority of pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey said that they would recommend the school to a friend moving to the area.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to accelerate the progress of lower attaining key stage 2 pupils in writing. The work we saw in pupils' books showed that they are making good progress in writing, spelling most words accurately. You have introduced a way of teaching writing that encourages pupils to say out loud what they want to write, before they write it. This has been successful in improving progress for all pupils, including the least able.

Your current improvement plans are ambitious. They rightly focus on raising standards even further, particularly in reading. In some lessons, I saw teachers providing pupils with more challenging work. However, this is not yet established throughout school. Leaders recognise that pupils must use their teachers' feedback effectively, to increase the proportion of pupils who are working at the higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a well-embedded culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff have received recent training and understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Your team are vigilant and report concerns in a timely manner. Staff work well with external agencies, when appropriate, to support vulnerable pupils and their families. You have a thorough system for recording and sharing records of concern with all staff, so they know how best to support vulnerable pupils. All procedures are fit for purpose.

Pupils told me that bullying is rare. They are confident that when it happens, adults in school help to sort it out. You have ensured that there are opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe. Pupils talked about their e-safety learning confidently, they explained their use of 'SMART' rules well. They explained that they have been taught these to keep themselves safe online. They know that visitors, such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, are invited into school to raise their awareness of dangers and how to speak to an adult about them. Some pupils have worked with the police and operate in school as 'mini-police'. They have led assemblies about the different forms of bullying and explained why discrimination is wrong. Pupils show respect for those of other faiths and enjoy learning about different religions. They participate in

visits to different places of worship. These help them to understand different faiths.

## **Inspection findings**

- I was interested to find out if disadvantaged pupils make good progress in the school. Leaders have regular meetings with teachers to look at the progress this group of pupils make. You ensure that, where disadvantaged pupils' progress slows, interventions are quickly put in place to help them catch up. When we looked at the work in pupils' books, we could see that disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2. You use the pupil premium grant to provide adult support for disadvantaged pupils. These staff provide effective feedback in lessons, which is successful in supporting pupils' learning.
- I also looked at the impact leaders have had on improving teaching and learning in key stage 2. I observed teaching in key stage 2 classes and identified precise learning objectives and well-structured activities. Both are enabling pupils to make good progress in lessons. I also looked at records of leaders' monitoring to check that teaching and learning is effective. Leaders, at all levels, carry out regular checks of the quality of teaching. They provide staff with small development targets to improve their teaching and pupils' learning. The progress pupils make is regularly analysed by leaders. Where pupils are not on track to meet ambitious targets, they are supported by interventions, which are effective in helping them to catch up. This is leading to improvement in the progress that pupils make.
- I was interested to see how pupils are challenged and supported to help them achieve the higher levels. In lessons, I saw adults providing effective feedback to pupils. In some lessons, teachers move pupils' learning on when they are ready to tackle more challenging tasks. However, leaders agree that more work is required to challenge pupils and to support them in working at the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Provisional 2018 results show that the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average. The development of pupils' comprehension skills and ability to read at length are areas for the school to develop this year. Your skilled reading leader has worked with staff and implemented an electronic system to assess pupils' understanding of the books they read. This recent introduction is leading to improvements in pupils' enjoyment of reading. Pupils are enthused by the new system. They are excited about the quizzes they complete when they have read a book. Although this is having a clear impact on pupils' enjoyment of reading, it is too early to see the impact on their progress.
- Your reading leader implemented a new approach to teaching reading this term. I observed a reading lesson where this new approach had been adopted and saw pupils' understanding of vocabulary being developed. As a result, pupils had a deeper understanding of the text.
- In recent years, pupils' attendance has been below the national average. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has been above the

national average. Quite correctly, you have identified pupils' attendance as an area for improvement. You and your staff are proactively working with families to improve their children's attendance. You have employed an education welfare officer to work with families and set targets for attendance with parents. Your thorough procedures for managing the absence of pupils include home visits, when necessary. These strategies are working and pupils are beginning to attend more often. Pupils' attendance is now much closer to the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is also reducing.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that all pupils are challenged in lessons, in order to increase the proportion of pupils working at the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics
- continue to develop and improve the teaching of reading, in order to extend pupils' language and comprehension skills further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local management board, the chief executive officer of the Nicholas Postgate 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

Timothy Scargill  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met you and other senior leaders. I held discussions with members of the local management board, subject leaders and key stage leaders. I considered the written comments of three parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and responses to the school's own parent survey. I took account of 16 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. I visited classes, with the headteacher, in the early years and in key stages 1 and 2. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, met with a group of pupils, formally and looked at samples of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and the school improvement plan. I considered a number of policy documents, including for safeguarding.