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Mr David Swift  
Headteacher  
Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary  
Westway  
Peterlee  
County Durham  
SR8 1DE

Dear Mr Swift

### **Short inspection of Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2019, 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 February 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have worked effectively with your governors and leaders in the school to sustain the high levels of care for all your pupils. With very few exceptions, parents, carers and pupils speak very highly of the help and support you give to them. As a result, pupils feel safe at school, and know that they can always get help if they have a concern.

Your staff are fully committed to pupils' well-being and learning. Middle leaders are keen to follow through changes to your approaches to teaching, learning and assessment to improve outcomes for pupils. Pupils are keen learners and apply themselves well to their tasks. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute to the progress they make.

You make sure that pupils have rich opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of their own and others' religious beliefs and traditions. Your work through the 'Rights Respecting School' framework is effective, developing in pupils a strong sense of right and wrong and the value of diversity. As a consequence, pupils are open, curious and respectful.

You and your staff are engaging positively with partner schools and the local

authority to improve the school's performance in those areas you correctly identify in your self-evaluation summary. You are in the process of sharpening the school's arrangements to check and record the progress pupils make. This is improving the way you provide additional support for pupils who are not progressing as well as they should.

Staff are beginning to analyse pupils' learning and progress with greater levels of detail, so that you can address gaps in pupils' learning with them. The growing focus on pupils' progress provides a clear focus for staff accountability. As a consequence, there are early signs that pupils' progress is strengthening, including the progress boys make. At the time of inspection, however, improvement was not substantial and sustained.

You have renewed your curriculum plans in English and mathematics to ensure that all the required elements are covered properly. This is leading to greater consistency in the way teachers plan short series of lessons. Pupils, especially boys, write extended passages regularly. They are making increasingly effective use of the improvements in reading to support the quality and accuracy of their writing. By introducing clear expectations of what pupils should achieve by the end of each year, you are beginning to raise expectations that will support pupils' progress better.

You have worked with staff and external teams to improve attendance. By sharpening your day-to-day practices for contacting families of absent pupils, you are raising the profile of this important aspect of school life. This helps families understand that good attendance is important for their children's well-being and progress. The recently opened free breakfast club provides additional encouragement for pupils to be at school in good time. However, absence rates remain too high.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The arrangements to keep pupils safe are fit for purpose.

Your work with governors and staff to keep pupils safe is a strength of the school. Well-trained staff, who know their pupils very well, are vigilant for any signs of neglect or abuse. They make use of the school's arrangements to report concerns. As a result, the designated safeguarding lead can ensure that pupils are kept safe and receive any early help they may need. The school works effectively with other relevant agencies and teams.

Governors and leaders ensure that all relevant pre-employment checks on staff are carried out and recorded on a single central register. Governors ensure that safeguarding leaders and staff receive up-to date training, so that they know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil.

Pupils are helped to understand the risks they might face, for example when they use digital technologies. They know they should always report any concerns to a

trusted adult, and learn to keep their personal details secure. Through the personal health, social and economic programme and religious studies curriculum, pupils learn about bullying and the harm it can cause. They say that they feel safe and happy in school. Parents, almost universally, praise the quality of care that staff provide for their children.

### **Inspection findings**

- The school's development work is leading to some greater consistency in using the approaches to teaching that you have introduced recently. However, these have not yet led to significant and sustained improvement in pupils' progress.
- Pupils have not made strong progress, particularly from key stage 1 to key stage 2, in English and mathematics in each of the previous three school years. Progress, over time, in key stage 1 has been stronger.
- Current pupils are beginning to demonstrate better rates of progress in their workbooks. However, progress is variable between year groups and subjects for pupils from a range of different starting points.
- Review of a sample of pupils' books and visits to lessons showed that work is not always challenging enough. Staff miss some opportunities to stretch pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. While pupils say that they think they learn well, this reflects some pupils' views that their work is too easy.
- You have sustained the effective provision for children in the early years. Leaders accurately assess children on entry, using a range of information, to organise a rich range of activities for children to develop well. Outcomes for children remain strong. Leaders are particularly effective in rapidly improving children's skills in speech and language and personal social education skills. Recent changes to their approaches to teacher-led activities in the Reception class is beginning to prepare pupils better for the challenges of key stage 1.
- Pupils behave very well throughout the day at school. However, your work with governors, staff and families to improve attendance has only recently begun to make a difference. The gap to the national average rate of attendance is closing. Despite these recent improvements, too many pupils do not attend regularly enough. Unauthorised and persistent absence rates are high, often because some families take holidays during term time.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the assessment system is refined to provide greater accuracy and is used to improve both the quality of teaching and pupils' progress rates
- teachers raise their expectations further of what pupils can achieve by planning learning that is consistently well matched to pupils' needs
- governors and leaders at all levels sharpen accountability for the progress pupils make

- they continue to strive to improve attendance rates further and reduce the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Campbell  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior and middle leaders. I also talked with pupils informally and in a group. I talked with a number of parents and other adults bringing pupils to school in the morning. I held meetings with the governing body and held telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. I gathered evidence by visiting lessons in each key stage and you accompanied me on some of these. I also considered the work in pupils' books. I considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff or pupil questionnaire. A wide range of documents was evaluated, including those relating to the school's safeguarding arrangements and the school's self-evaluation and plans for future development. I considered the school's records of pupils' progress and information about their attendance.