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Mrs Clare Roberts
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Roberts

Short inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You became headteacher in September 2016 and your deputy headteacher took up her role in September 2017. The local authority provided you with effective support during the early stages of your leadership, but this is no longer needed. You have developed effective strategies to challenge some underperformance by staff and to address some dips in pupils' achievement. I will report on these in more detail later in this letter.

You have been mostly successful in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils, particularly in key stage 1, to produce a range of writing of good quality in subjects other than English. These include writing reports about investigations in science, for example. Most-able pupils show that they write using skills that demonstrate an ability to work at greater depth. In Year 1, for instance, they incorporate more complex structures for their age, such as, 'He began carving a puppet.' Historical assessment information shows that, by the end of Year 2, typically a larger proportion of pupils have attained at greater depth since the previous inspection. The progress in writing of most current pupils is good. This is because you have developed their use of adventurous vocabulary and more advanced sentence structure. There is now scope for leaders to embed their changes to enable more pupils to attain at greater depth by the end of Year 2.

You have successfully resolved the issues identified around leadership and

management. You and your deputy headteacher are dynamic and form an effective team. You have a secure view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Plans for improvement are clear and measurable and identify required actions accurately. Leaders of subjects, including those other than English and mathematics, carry out purposeful checks on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. They feed back areas for improvement to members of staff. This helps staff to improve their practice and search out additional help if required. Evidence from books shows that pupils successfully acquire knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects. Teaching and pupils' progress are good.

You and your team have established a warm and welcoming learning environment that is underpinned by the school's clear Roman Catholic ethos. You are effective in supporting pupils' self-esteem by celebrating, in various displays, the best of their work. An impressive collection of trophies for victories in netball and football tournaments, among others, adorns the entrance to school and celebrates success in competitive sports.

The pupils to whom I spoke said that they very much enjoy coming to school. Throughout the inspection, pupils showed themselves to be very well behaved, with strongly positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and articulate.

You provide breakfast and after-school clubs, which help to support parents and carers and give the pupils who attend them a good start to the day. Your staff ensure that they supervise pupils effectively. They provide them with plenty of interesting activities, including outdoor games, art work and opportunities to use computers.

Bullying is extremely rare, including racist and homophobic bullying. Leaders are proactive in promoting an anti-bullying message through a range of activities, such as special assemblies and themed books that teachers share with pupils in class.

Members of staff are very positive about their work in school and morale is high. They especially appreciate the training that you provide, saying that it helps to develop them as professionals.

Parents were overwhelmingly positive in their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Typically, they reported that they are extremely pleased with the quality of education that the school provides and noted the 'brilliant out-of-school activities'.

The local authority, through its local consortium structure, and the archdiocese provide effective support to leaders. They have an accurate view of standards in the school and are rightly confident in the capabilities of you and your senior leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The electronically stored records are detailed and of high quality. The designated leader for safeguarding is prompt in responding to concerns and makes referrals to other agencies when necessary. The school's required record of checks on members of staff is comprehensive and complies with the government's guidance.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and receive regular updates throughout the year. They have a secure knowledge of the different signs of abuse. Any concerns about pupils' welfare are recorded promptly on the school's electronic system.

Pupils feel safe in school and know they can talk to any member of staff if they have a concern. They know how to avoid the dangers of the internet because teachers give them relevant information. They also benefit from sessions in road safety. Pupils work with the local council to find ways of ensuring that pupils are safe from traffic in the local area. For example, they are currently helping the council to design new signs to warn motorists to take extra care near their school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the day we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry that I followed throughout the inspection. I have already reported on how well you have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. I have also written about the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned the recent dip in progress in reading to below average at the end of Year 6 in 2018. A legacy of weaker teaching contributed to this dip. However, attainment was above average. Leaders have successfully challenged underperformance in teaching and have trained staff in a more effective approach to the teaching of reading. For example, leaders have introduced a more focused structure that systematically teaches a range of key reading skills. These include working out meanings from clues in the text and predicting what might happen next. Leaders have also taken effective action to promote reading by, for example, developing a new library area, which pupils use purposefully to strengthen their reading skills. Teachers assess pupils' understanding. They organise regular 'quizzes' on books that pupils have read, and teachers record their results. This enables staff to keep a close watch on pupils' progress. Evidence from teachers' records shows that most current pupils are now acquiring reading skills successfully. Teachers have been more effective at challenging the most able pupils to read harder texts and gain a greater depth of understanding from what they read. This challenge is not fully embedded and some of these pupils read texts or complete tasks that are not challenging enough. Nevertheless, the school's assessment information shows that overall progress is good.
- My next line of enquiry related to the progress of current most-able pupils in writing. I have already reported above on the aspects of this matter that relate to pupils in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2018 who

attained greater depth in writing dipped below the national average. You and your leaders have introduced a more structured approach to enable pupils to acquire writing skills more efficiently. Teachers now focus more closely on, for instance, developing more advanced vocabulary. There is also a more systematic process, in which staff give more attention to explaining the main features of various writing genres before pupils then apply them to extended pieces. Workbooks show clear evidence of more sophisticated writing. For instance, in Year 6, most-able pupils choose language and structures to engage the reader, writing sentences such as, 'I was absolutely devastated' or 'Around me was the most peculiar of things.' The vast majority of pupils in key stage 2 make good progress in their writing and teachers typically have high expectations of the most able. However, leaders have not fully embedded their strategies to challenge most-able pupils so that a higher proportion of them attain greater depth.

- Finally, leaders and, in particular, governors understand their statutory responsibilities well. Governors are well trained in safeguarding. They have a good grasp of its effectiveness in school because there is a dedicated governor who liaises with the designated lead. They also scrutinise regular reports from the headteacher and receive updates on safeguarding issues. Governors firmly hold leaders to account. For example, they challenged underperformance to ensure that leaders addressed the dip in reading progress and strengthened teaching. Their work has contributed to recent improvements and to the good quality of education in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers embed leaders' changes to provide more-challenging work in reading for the most able in key stage 2
- they embed their approaches to challenging the most able in writing to enable more pupils to attain greater depth by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out short visits to all year groups, which were joint activities with you. I analysed pupils' work in a variety of subjects. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, the school's assessment information and records connected with the safeguarding of pupils. I held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, governors, pupils and representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese. I evaluated 59 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.