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Mrs Felicity Hope
Head of School
St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hope

Short inspection of St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 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 predecessor 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 predecessor school's last inspection.

Since your promotion within the school in September 2018, you have worked closely with the executive headteacher to maintain and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' progress. I was impressed by the environment for learning that staff create, including attractive, high-quality displays, which celebrate pupils' achievements across the curriculum.

The school has a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere. Sensitive issues are managed thoughtfully to support pupils, staff and parents. The many staff and pupils who responded to the online questionnaires indicate that they are proud to be part of the school and feel valued. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, expressed strong support for everything the school does. This comment encapsulates the views of many: 'Great school with a really good atmosphere. My child is very happy here and has made good progress academically and socially. Teachers can never do enough for the students and really nurture their talents.'

With the support of the executive headteacher and the multi-academy trust, you are already developing a strong, dedicated leadership team. Leaders enthusiastically discuss how professional training is improving their own skills and those of teachers. They praise the sharing of best practice across the schools in the trust, which includes checking that teachers' assessments are accurate. New strategies are

developing pupils' fluency and mathematical reasoning skills. The changes in the teaching of reading and writing including the use of high-quality texts, are improving pupils' oracy, vocabulary, grammar, spelling and comprehension skills. Effective systems are in place to check the impact of these strategies on pupils' learning and progress.

Leaders and governors have identified the correct actions to strengthen aspects of school life that require further development. You have correctly identified the need to diminish any gaps between groups of pupils, especially those between boys and girls to raise standards further. Governors are well informed and ensure that the impact of leaders' actions is checked regularly and rigorously. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Alongside the support of the multi-academy trust there is good capacity for further school improvement.

Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They focus on their tasks well, persevering with their interesting activities so that they can succeed in their learning. Pupils from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds work well together, showing respect and tolerance towards one another. Most pupils who are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language settle into school life swiftly and usually make good progress from their various starting points.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of British values is effective. Staff celebrate the diversity of pupils within the school. We observed this during a Year 2 celebration assembly for parents. Pupils showed good-quality skills when singing and dancing in national costumes from countries around the world. Pupils spoken to during the inspection talk enthusiastically about their learning. They value their many trips, including those to the Lake District, the theatre and the Houses of Parliament to develop their skills across the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. You ensure that keeping pupils safe is a high priority for everyone. You have created a secure and caring environment in which pupils and staff feel valued. Safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose and of a good quality. Staff and governors receive regular, up-to-date child protection training.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to be safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet. Pupils' state that there is no bullying in the school and if there are any issues, staff sort these quickly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- In order to check whether the school remains good, my first line of enquiry explored how current pupils are doing. I wanted to determine whether pupils' outcomes are likely to be maintained and improved upon, and whether differences are diminishing between groups, especially for boys. This is because published information shows that boys' outcomes at key stages 1 and 2 were

weaker than those for girls in 2018.

- Leaders' analysis of current performance information shows that pupils in most year groups are making good and better progress from their various starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Any differences in the rates of progress between groups including boys and girls, disadvantaged pupils and those who are in the early stages of learning English are diminishing. Leaders identify quickly where this is not the case, and put in effective support to improve the learning for these pupils.
- School information indicates that a similar or greater proportion of pupils are on track to reach the expected standard than previously in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This provides evidence that pupils' outcomes are likely to be maintained or improved upon at the end of both key stages. The high quality of teaching, and work seen in pupils' books across the school, also indicate that the school's view is accurate.
- My next focus was to investigate teaching, learning and the curriculum in the early years. This is because the proportion of children attaining a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year declined in 2018, and boys did less well than girls.
- Strong leadership in the early years coupled with an effective team is improving teaching and learning, with a clear focus on enhancing the learning opportunities for boys. Effective questioning improves children's speaking and listening skills. I observed a teacher encouraging good-quality discussion from boys acting as travel agents as they enthusiastically booked her a very expensive holiday to see lions in Africa.
- The teaching of phonics has been strengthened, with adults ensuring that group activities meet children's needs. We observed boys and girls using their knowledge of phonics to support their spelling and writing, when describing a troll for a 'Beware' poster. The children showed good attitudes to learning, with focused concentration throughout their activities. They follow class routines and work and play well together.
- Assessment of pupils' starting points and the progress they make throughout the Reception Year is rigorous and accurate. This evidence, combined with effective teaching, and the children's work indicate that both boys and girls are making good and better progress from their often-low starting points. As a result, children are being prepared well for key stage 1.
- I next considered how the curriculum supports pupils to make good progress across a variety of subjects. Leaders and teachers are currently reviewing the school's engaging curriculum to ensure that more purposeful, creative links build up pupils' knowledge and skills over time. The current curriculum offers pupils many purposeful opportunities to apply their English skills across other subjects to deepen their understanding. However, there are fewer opportunities to apply and develop their mathematics skills across other subjects.
- My final line of enquiry investigated how leaders are improving pupils' attendance, which declined last year with a rapid increase in the rate of persistent non-attendance. You have appointed a leader to closely monitor pupils'

attendance and to support parents so that their children attend school more often. You communicate the importance of regular attendance clearly through regular newsletters to parents. Effective actions have already improved attendance: by December 2018, attendance was broadly in line with the national average. The March 2019 information shows that the number of persistent non-attenders is declining rapidly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff implement plans to strengthen the curriculum, in order to improve pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, to raise standards further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of East Anglia, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, governors and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. I spoke to a group of pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. Additionally, I examined policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff. You and I visited all classrooms in the school to observe pupils' learning and scrutinise the work in pupils' books. The views of 70 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, along with the written views of 43 parents from the free-text service. I also looked at the online questionnaire responses from 22 staff and 125 pupils.