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Ms Kathleen Williams  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Williams

### **Short inspection of Holy Cross RC School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 2019 with Milan Stevanovic, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your collaborative vision of 'growing hearts and minds' permeates the school. You have overseen the impressive refurbishment of the building to enhance the pupils' learning environment. Leaders and governors make sure all pupils and families feel welcome and included. Parents and carers speak highly of the school and its leaders. One parent told me that the school is 'like a big family'; another parent praised how her child had 'blossomed' since joining the school.

You lead and manage The Fulham Bilingual, where the curriculum is taught in both English and French. One third of Holy Cross pupils attend this provision.

The well-being of both staff and pupils is a high priority for you. Pupils feel secure through strong relationships with staff and each other as well as through the school's Catholic ethos. Staff are equally supported by leaders at the school, both in managing workload and through effective professional development. Staff benefit from opportunities to work with the other local schools which you oversee in order to develop their teaching practice.

The school has strong provision for music and the creative arts. The wide range of musical events and activities on offer enable pupils to explore their interests and talents. You provide a wide range of enrichment opportunities, taking advantage of your setting in the heart of London. High-quality artwork, in a variety of different media, celebrating London is displayed across the school.

The governing body is supportive, knowledgeable and ambitious for the school and its pupils. Governors have played a significant part in the journey of improvement and are proud of the school's achievements. Attainment is strong in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards at the end of each key stage are well above the national averages. However, in other areas of the curriculum, the standard of pupils' work is not as consistent. Leaders are developing the curriculum to address this. However, this work is at an early stage.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Secure systems and processes are in place and, as a result, all staff know how to report any safeguarding concerns. As a team, you follow up any issues carefully and swiftly, working well with external agencies to protect pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders complete the required checks to ensure that all staff are suitable to work in the school. These checks are recorded on the single central record, which is updated and monitored regularly by leaders and governors.

You make sure that all staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training that supports their understanding of the current statutory guidance. You remind staff frequently about their duties in safeguarding pupils. There is a rolling programme of staff training in place. This means that all staff are kept fully aware of the risks that pupils may be facing, such as keeping safe online. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school. They are confident that you and your staff will keep them safe and respond promptly to any concerns they may have.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry was to find out what leaders have put in place to improve pupils' progress in reading and writing, and across other areas of the curriculum, particularly during key stage 2. This is because in 2018 progress in reading and writing for all pupils and particularly the most able had dropped since the previous year.
- You have implemented a new reading strategy this year and this has recently been extended to key stage 1. The changes that leaders have made are paying dividends. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to explore texts in depth. Teachers select texts carefully to help pupils make links with their learning in other curriculum subjects. Pupils' attitudes to reading are strong. Teachers build on this effectively by making sure that pupils read regularly at home in order to develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Teachers are very positive about this and say that it is really improving pupils' excitement in reading. You acknowledge that these new approaches need to be fully embedded so that they continue to have a positive impact on pupils' reading skills and progress throughout the school.
- Currently, the school uses a topic-based approach to the teaching of history and geography. In some classes, pupils make good gains in their knowledge and

understanding because teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn. When planning learning, teachers consider what pupils already know or can do, and make sure activities are well matched to pupils' prior learning. However, these strengths are not consistent across year groups or classes. As a result, the standard of work in pupils' books is variable.

- You and your leaders have made developing the curriculum a priority. You are introducing clear guidance on the knowledge you expect pupils to know and remember in each topic. This is a way of ensuring that all teachers have the key vocabulary and subject knowledge at their fingertips and pupils have an opportunity to study subjects using more complex vocabulary and in much greater depth. There are early signs that these changes are having a positive effect. For instance, an inspector saw leaders' guidance being used to great effect during the teaching of a design and technology lesson. Nevertheless, leaders' work in this area is recent, and it is too soon to say whether it will have a clear impact on pupils' progress.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 and in the early years. This was because in 2018, although numbers are decreasing, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was lower than that of their peers nationally at the end of Year 2.
- Leaders make sure that disadvantaged children get off to a strong start in the Nursery class. They are offered a rich experience of indoor and outdoor learning opportunities across all areas of the early years curriculum. Teaching places due weight on promoting the development of children's early reading and writing skills. Children benefit from plenty of opportunities to make marks and use their phonic knowledge to write their name and other simple words. Children enjoy sharing and talking about stories. A child read a simple sentence from a story to me with strong phonic fluency, able to explain what she had read and why a character in the book was upset.
- Reception children were equally confident and articulate. Leaders provide a similar range of indoor and outdoor learning opportunities for the children. I looked at a range of books in Reception, where I saw that, although children make good progress overall, some are capable of more in order to make strong progress in writing from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 are making strong progress because leaders provide them with effective support. I looked at a range of their books where there was evidence of work being well matched to their needs in order to improve progress.
- My final line of enquiry focused on how well leaders promote pupils' well-being. Leaders stated that this aspect of the school's work was particularly strong.
- Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the levels of care that the school provides. You have strong systems in place and every pupil is known personally to leaders. You identify swiftly where a pupil is vulnerable or struggling emotionally and you provide nurturing opportunities in small groups. The school's nurturing atmosphere is palpable. You offer well-targeted financial support for clubs, music lessons or trips to make sure that all pupils can access the opportunities which the school provides. Pupils spoke confidently about how

much they enjoy coming to school. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school through a holistic approach, where pupils' personal development is given equal value with academic success.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum for science, history and geography enables pupils to make good gains in their subject-specific knowledge
- reading strategies are further embedded across all phases and evaluated regularly to ensure that pupils' progress in reading continues to improve

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Ladipo  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with parents before school. Inspectors visited most classrooms, together with either the head of school or a senior leader. We observed and talked to pupils as they were learning. We looked at pupils' work in classrooms. Meetings were held with you and the head of school to discuss the school's self-evaluation school improvement priorities. A meeting was also held with members of the governing body and I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority. I met with the head of school from the Fulham Bilingual provision, together with the English leader. Inspectors met with subject leaders. Together with leaders, inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and assessment information to evaluate their outcomes over time. This included work from the bilingual provision. Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation and the single central record of vetting checks on staff. Inspectors also met with the safeguarding leader. Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss their views on school life. A range of documents was scrutinised, including minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors considered the views of parents through the 198 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View. The 24 responses received from pupils to Ofsted's survey were also taken into account.