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Mrs Claire Cade
Headteacher
Holy Family and St Michael's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy
Cobblers Lane
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Dear Mrs Cade

Short inspection of Holy Family and St Michael's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2017, 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 May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The determined and insightful leadership that you and your deputy headteacher have shown has ensured that the school has continued to improve year on year. You take a very focused approach to solving problems and this has enabled you to ensure that barriers for both pupils and staff are overcome quickly and effectively.

You understand your school well and are very clear about what needs to be done to bring about improvement. For example, you have taken successful action to improve writing across the school. The school improvement plan accurately prioritises important issues. These link directly to performance management targets for all staff.

Staff value and support the school vision and values. Their enthusiasm for ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met shines through all that they do. Staff were very keen to explain how they valued the support given by both leaders and their peers. This they felt enabled them to contribute to making the school the best that it can be.

Approximately one fifth of pupils are of Polish heritage. All pupils who attend the school are equally proud to be members of the school community. They show kind and caring attitudes to each other and visitors. Pupils are aware that bullying

sometimes occurs but are very clear that staff will effectively deal with it should it happen. They are ambassadors for the school and show clear understanding of how important it is to respect everyone in society no matter who they are. This mature attitude was reflected in pupils' behaviour in both the playground and the classroom. Learning is rarely interrupted by difficult behaviour and pupils play happily together at break and lunchtime. This also clearly demonstrated the school's success at preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.

The quality of work in pupils' books from last year is strong across the school for the vast majority of pupils. However, progress was less strong in one year group than in others. You became aware of this and took swift action. As a result, work in pupils' books this year is already demonstrating good progress for this group.

Disadvantaged pupils make good progress alongside others in the school. Recent information collected by the school showed that this group are making strong progress, particularly in key stage 2. The diligent work carried out by the school's special educational needs coordinator has ensured that funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effectively targeted to meet pupils' individual needs. As a result, this group make similar progress to others nationally.

You have already taken decisive action to turn around the small dip in reading results in key stage 1. Promoting bedtime stories for younger children and buying books for older pupils to read at night are already beginning to improve reading scores across the school.

It was a pleasure to visit the Reception class during the inspection and to observe the calm and purposeful atmosphere created by the early years team. This is reflected in the increase in numbers of children reaching the early learning goals over the last three years. However, both you and the early years leader recognise more needs to be done to increase further the number of children reaching the expected stage of development by the end of Reception. The work of the recently employed bilingual teaching assistant is beginning to make a difference to Polish children and their families. However, it is too soon for the full effect of her work to be felt.

The governing body are forthright, caring and knowledgeable. The chair of the governing body is an ex-headteacher who is very clear about the need to support and challenge school leaders and does so effectively, from a well-informed position. Members of the academy trust support leaders effectively. They have contributed well to improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils by working closely with the headteacher.

Pupils' attendance is getting closer to the national average for primary schools. However, there remains a small group of families who choose to take holidays in term time. Unfortunately, the number of families doing so increased last year after a recent court ruling. School leaders are now working hard to reverse this trend and to ensure that the message that every school day counts is relayed to parents and

carers. The work of the education welfare service is contributing to an increase in pupils' attendance this year.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the deputy headteacher are passionate about the need to safeguard pupils and have ensured that safeguarding practices and protocols meet statutory requirements. Records and confidential information are maintained safely and appropriately and written records are of a good standard.

Staff are clear how safeguarding underpins the work of the school and how keeping children safe is a key priority for all. The regularly updated training, provided for all staff, has ensured that they are knowledgeable about what to do in the event of an incident occurring. Pupils I spoke to explained clearly and carefully how the school keeps them safe and ensures that they know how to keep safe outside of school, particularly when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- A focus of my visit was to evaluate the progress of children in the Reception class. In 2015, 50% of children reached a good level of development at the end of their time in Reception. In 2016, this rose to 53% and in 2017 the proportion reached 60%. This shows a three-year upward trend. However, you and other leaders are aware that this trend needs to continue for standards to reach those seen nationally.
- Within this year's cohort of 30 children, 10 are from Eastern European families and are new to speaking English. The very recent appointment of a bilingual teaching assistant is beginning to help improve the language skills of children new to English.
- The improved number of written signs in the early years unit has ensured that it is a language rich environment. This helps all children to develop their speaking, listening and reading skills.
- A further focus of the inspection was to evaluate the progress of pupils in key stage 1 in mathematics. Two years ago, the number of pupils achieving a higher standard dipped. Discussion with the mathematics coordinator and observations in lessons quickly established that last year pupils made better progress overall. Work in pupils' books showed clearly that most-able pupils are now offered more challenging work and that this had increased their progress overall.
- In 2016, pupils in key stage 2 made less progress in science than others nationally. This became an inspection focus. Discussions with the science coordinator quickly identified teachers' lack of confidence at planning scientific investigations, particularly in key stage 2. The science coordinator is passionate about the subject and has worked with teachers in a variety of different ways to enable them to gain confidence in teaching this element of the science curriculum. An increase in the levels of achievement in science in 2017 and work in pupils' books confirm the success of her actions.

- The absence levels of pupils in school were higher than those nationally for several groups of pupils both last year and in 2016. Disadvantaged pupils were absent more often than others in the school and others nationally. School leaders recognise that a pupil being absent from school may lead to a safeguarding concern. As a result, leaders have put in place very effective systems to monitor absence. These start as soon as a pupil does not arrive for registration, and may involve informing the police if parents cannot be contacted.
- School leaders have also worked hard to understand the root cause of the problems facing families and recognise pupils' illness and pupils taking holidays in term time account for much of pupil absence from school. Close working partnerships with the Catholic Care social worker and the local authority's education welfare services have begun to bring about improvement in pupils' attendance overall. However, leaders recognise there is still work to be done to reach the school's goal of attendance levels in line with other schools nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- planned changes to continue to improve the quality of provision within the early years are implemented in a timely manner
- work started on increasing pupils' attendance is continued at an accelerated pace.

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

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you and your senior leadership team. I held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body, as well as a representative from the academy trust. I also met informally with parents at the school gates and took into account views expressed in parents' comments made by text and on Ofsted's Parent View.

You and members of the leadership team accompanied me as we observed learning in classrooms across the school and looked at work in pupils' books. I also scrutinised a range of safeguarding and other documents relating to pupils' behaviour and the curriculum.