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Mrs Patricia Dear  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Dear

### **Short inspection of St Ursula's Catholic Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 2016, 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 July 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that the many good qualities identified at the previous inspection continue to be strengths of the school. These include effective provision for pupils' welfare, positive relationships with families, good teaching and improving academic achievement. The curriculum continues to place high priority on pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. As a result, pupils achieve well academically and socially. Pupils continue to make a strong contribution within the community and their parishes through charity work and participation in local events.

At the last inspection, the report recommended improvements to the provision in early years. You have addressed this effectively. Consequently, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has continued to improve for the last three years and is in line with the national average. Therefore, children make good progress, because the majority start school below the expected stage in many areas of learning, including reading, writing and mathematics.

Senior leaders also play an important role in supporting another school to improve the quality of its provision, resulting in improved outcomes for its children. This partnership is highly successful.

Leaders and governors are taking effective action to improve achievement in mathematics and writing. Over time, the outcomes of pupils in Year 2 rose above national averages. You have correctly identified a slight decline in 2015 and emerging gaps in achievement for some of the most-able and disadvantaged pupils. You and senior leaders have acted with urgency to tackle this. You check pupils' progress every six weeks in order to make adjustments to provision accordingly. Current assessment information shows these actions are accelerating pupil progress for these groups. You recognise that this remains a priority.

As headteacher you have a positive impact on pupils' academic achievement at the school. You, together with other leaders and governors, evaluate closely the school's strengths and areas for development. This evaluation is accurate and links effectively to the current improvement activities. This has resulted in necessary improvements in outcomes for the most-able and disadvantaged pupils. New systems for assessment enable teachers to measure pupils' progress accurately and plan teaching carefully so that activities meet pupils' learning needs.

The school provides a curriculum that ensures that pupils develop tolerance and respect for other beliefs and good understanding of the Catholic ethos of the school. Pupils' learning is enhanced through stimulating assemblies, projects, class trips and interesting events at school. Pupils' personal and academic achievements are celebrated, which encourages them to participate fully. The school is a happy and vibrant place to be.

You are ably supported by a team of senior leaders. Together, you accurately monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the school. Senior leaders make regular visits to classrooms to check the quality of teaching and provide effective support for teachers. You have identified that a priority is to develop further subject leaders' skills in monitoring the impact of teaching on outcomes for groups of pupils. Effective action is already being taken and pupils' progress is improving rapidly.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' well-being and safety are central to all aspects of the school's work. The calm, orderly environment contributes to nurturing relationships between the staff and pupils. The vast majority of parents and staff say that pupils are safe at the school. Pupils agree and are able to explain how they stay safe in a range of different situations, including when using the internet or electronic devices.

Leaders maintain rigorous and effective systems to safeguard children, including pre-appointment checks for new employees. Safeguarding systems are understood well by all. Staff are confident in raising any issues with leaders as they arise, and feel that no concern or worry is ever overlooked. A designated governor oversees safeguarding and reports back to the full governing body at regular meetings.

Staff are trained regularly about child protection matters and receive updates about any recent, relevant guidance. Parents are also kept informed. Recently, many parents attended a workshop hosted by school leaders which developed

understanding in the community about the potential threat from radicalisation and female genital mutilation.

### **Inspection findings**

- You maintain a stable and committed staff community. Staff are proud to be part of the school and are clear about the school's current goals. Due to this, there is a clear sense of direction and team work throughout the school.
- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view about the school's strengths and areas for development. They have accurately identified that outcomes for Year 2 pupils fell below national expectations in 2015, following an upward trend. You have prioritised actions to address this. These are set out in the annual plan for improvement. However, some actions do not identify the intended impact on pupils' progress clearly enough. As a result, governors are not able to evaluate progress as effectively as possible.
- Subject leaders and senior leaders are driving improvements in teaching and learning. Leaders observe teaching, provide helpful feedback and meet teachers to provide support for lesson planning and to review pupils' progress. However, they do not always check the progress of the most-able or disadvantaged pupils in work books or lessons. You have identified this as an area for improvement.
- Teaching throughout the school is good. An effective range of activities is taught that captures pupils' interests. For example, when studying the work of a significant artist, pupils deepened their mathematical understanding by observing shape and pattern in graphic design. A number of teaching assistants are available to support learning. However, their effectiveness varies across classes. In the best lessons, assistants identify the pupils they are supporting and are clear about these pupils' intended learning.
- Teachers use the new assessment system to inform their planning. As a result, they plan activities at the right level of challenge for pupils of different abilities. This ensures better progress for all pupils, including the most-able pupils.
- The teaching of reading remains a high priority. A range of new initiatives has been introduced and is evidently accelerating progress. Initiatives include an internet resource to support regular home reading, and additional reading lessons for selected pupils so they do not fall behind. The school library is well stocked and includes a range of high-quality children's stories, poetry and information books.
- The teaching of phonics (the link between sounds and letters) is effective and ensures the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard by the end of Year 1 is above the national average. This has been sustained for a number of years. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who did not meet the expected level are being supported effectively to catch up this year.
- Teaching in the early years prepares children well for their next stage in education. Assessment of children's starting points is accurate. It demonstrates that the majority of children start school with skills below those expected for their age in many areas of learning. The proportion of

pupils achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year continues to rise and is in line with the national average. Although the proportion of girls and disadvantaged children who achieved the skills expected for their age at the end of Reception declined in 2015, Year 1 teachers have ensured these pupils are making up for lost ground this year.

- Early years provision is a strength both inside and outdoors. Teachers encourage imaginative use of everyday objects and ensure children develop good social skills. For example, children in the Nursery were observed making a birthday cake using found objects from the garden (twigs, mud, leaves and gravel). They worked cooperatively to mix ingredients, share utensils and discuss recipes. One child, who wanted to join in, requested politely, 'Please can I help?' and was welcomed.
- Pupils' behaviour is good during lessons, at playtimes and around the school. Attendance continues to improve and for the past three years has been better than the national averages. The proportion of fixed-term exclusions and persistent absence has significantly reduced this year.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most-able and disadvantaged pupils continue to make accelerated progress
- subject leaders regularly check academic progress of all pupils
- the governing body rigorously monitors the impact of planned improvements for all groups of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Brentwood, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for London Borough of Havering. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kirstie Fulthorpe  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and members of the senior leadership team, including the senior leader with responsibility for early years. I also met a group of subject leaders, an administrator, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. I visited all of the classes during the day to observe teaching and learning, accompanied by a senior leader. I also looked at a sample of books, including for a selection of disadvantaged pupils. I visited playtime, assembly and the breakfast club. I evaluated the school's most recent information relating to pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation and the annual plan for improvement. Other records were scrutinised, including documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding, admissions and attendance. I evaluated the responses of 19 staff, six pupils and 12 parents to the inspection's online questionnaires.