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Mrs Frances Stephenson  
Headteacher  
All Saints' Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Stephenson

### **Short inspection of All Saints' Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 the school was judged to be good in June 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since you joined the school in September 2016, you have swiftly tackled aspects of the school's performance which you identified, correctly, as needing improvement. You have quickly developed a strong team of leaders who are effective in supporting you to improve the quality of teaching in the school. You have improved the curriculum for phonics and reading and increased the outcomes achieved by pupils in this important aspect of their learning. Pupils' workbooks show that their achievement is good and improving in writing and mathematics across the school. Parents describe you as 'a breath of fresh air' and most of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire recognise the positive changes to the school since your arrival.

Pupils' conduct around school is exemplary. Staff consistently set the highest expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are rightly proud of their good manners and respectful attitudes. They identify 'kindness to others' and 'friendliness' as key strengths of this happy school. In every year group, pupils apply themselves well to their learning. Calm pervades the classrooms, corridors and other shared spaces. Pupils' personal, moral and spiritual development is a strength of the school. This was exemplified through a liturgical dance workshop during the inspection, where Year 5 pupils were reflecting on the life of Blessed Oscar Romero and taking inspiration from him to help them to face challenges in their own lives.

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced some turbulence in senior leadership over an extended period. Governors worked closely with the local authority and the diocese to secure temporary leadership arrangements, including the appointment of a consultant headteacher to support the acting headteacher. This provided some stability for the school at a difficult time. However, the governing body recognise that some aspects of the school's performance did not improve as rapidly as they would have wished during this period. Governors, staff and pupils are delighted that they now have permanent and strong leadership at the helm of the school. They are fully supportive of your work and share your uncompromising ambition for the school's future.

Leaders' work to improve provision in the early years since the previous inspection has increased the outcomes achieved by children. A higher than average proportion of children reached and exceeded the early learning goals, the nationally expected levels for their age, at the end of the Reception Year in 2016.

You identified correctly that teaching was not enabling enough pupils to make the rapid progress of which they were capable, to exceed the expected levels of attainment in writing and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6. You and your middle leaders have worked relentlessly to address this and a greater proportion of pupils are now working at higher levels of attainment across the school. You recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that every teacher sets work which is consistently at the right level to allow pupils to make the best progress they can, and in every subject. This includes extending the checks made by subject leaders on the quality of teaching to include all areas of the curriculum.

While disadvantaged pupils generally reach the nationally expected levels of attainment for their age, too few make faster progress from secure starting points to reach above-average levels of attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Governors have not ensured that pupil premium spending has been evaluated rigorously and targets set for this and other aspects of school performance have not been sharp enough.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have been proactive in seeking external advice and guidance to assure yourself that safeguarding arrangements are robust. All staff receive frequent training and guidance so they know how to keep pupils safe. They know the early warning signs linked to issues such as radicalisation and extremism and are clear about procedures to report concerns. Governors do not rely solely on information provided by leaders, but take the right steps to assure themselves that pupils are kept safe in school.

You have carefully assessed the most significant risks to pupils' safety in the school and recognise that staying safe online is a priority for your pupils. As a result of leaders' work, pupils can articulate strategies they use to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet. The recent appointment of 'e-cadets' has been

met with excitement by pupils and reflects your longer-term aspirations to empower pupils to take the lead on aspects of the curriculum relating to safety.

Leaders have improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils to above the national average for other pupils. Your work has also reduced the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school to well below the national average. No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have an impressive and incisive understanding of the historical and current attainment and progress of pupils. You recognise the capabilities of your pupils and have appropriately high expectations of what they can achieve. In the short time since your arrival, you have tightened the systems to manage teachers' performance and have galvanised staff to tackle key aspects of provision. This has led to notable improvements in pupils' progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You have acted quickly to strengthen the skills of the leadership team, who share your vision for the school. They have benefited from your coaching and support to ensure that they are well placed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the leader for mathematics responded quickly to the findings of her checks on the quality of teaching and worked with staff to introduce a new policy on methods of calculation. This has led to better progression in the way that pupils tackle formal, written calculations.
- During the inspection, I looked closely at how well children, especially the most able, achieve in the early years. You have invested significantly in training for staff and the purchase of new equipment and resources to support pupils' outdoor learning. Children enjoy choosing activities which pique their interest. For example, a group of girls made excellent use of the role play area to pretend to be veterinary surgeons, performing 'surgery' and writing out prescriptions. Children's progress is accelerated by carefully targeted, small-group teaching from staff. In the Reception class in 2015/2016, the proportions of children reaching and exceeding the early learning goals were well-above average. Current children's work shows that their achievement, particularly in reading and writing, continues to rise, with an even higher proportion of children on track to exceed the nationally expected levels of attainment this academic year.
- Pupils have consistently achieved standards above the national average in the Year 1 phonics check until 2016, when standards dipped and were in line with the national average. Leaders and governors took rapid action. Staff received additional training, the curriculum for phonics teaching was overhauled and leaders have checked regularly on the quality of provision. You have also increased the frequency and rigour of teachers' assessments in phonics. Teaching has improved and the proportion of current pupils in Year 1 working at the level expected for their age is now above the national average.
- Despite the fact that pupils have consistently achieved well in national assessments in reading at the end of Years 2 and 6, your rigorous self-evaluation alerted you to some aspects of reading provision which needed improvement.

New reading resources have helped to engage boys with reading successfully. Training for staff has resulted in well-planned teaching to develop pupils' comprehension skills. Standards of attainment in reading continue to rise.

- You identified, accurately, that too few pupils were making rapid progress to achieve the higher levels of attainment in writing and mathematics. Most teachers have responded well to the professional development you provided and are now setting tasks in mathematics which challenge pupils, particularly the most able, at the right level. Clearer feedback from teachers is helping pupils to improve their work. Teachers are now demanding that pupils write at length more often. Skilled teaching is helping pupils to understand the features of different genres of writing. As a result, the proportion of pupils working at the higher levels has increased. Occasionally, some teachers still do not choose the right tasks which help pupils to achieve as well as they can. You are aware of this and are providing appropriate support to improve this teaching.
- One of my key areas of focus during the inspection was examining the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Too few of this group of pupils make more rapid progress to reach the highest levels of attainment. Governors recognise that they have focused historically on securing age-related expectations for this group of pupils, rather than considering pupils' progress from their individual starting points. Leaders are beginning to address this, but the targets they have set to increase pupils' progress through their pupil premium plan and in other development plans cannot be measured easily by governors. Governors also acknowledge that they have not reviewed the spending of pupil premium funding well enough to ensure that it has the maximum impact on pupils' achievement.
- Since your arrival in September 2016, you have refined the systems to check the quality of teaching and to assess pupils' progress. You prioritised this work in the key subjects of English and mathematics and recognise that you now need to extend the systems to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are monitored as robustly. Subject leaders have a planned programme of activities to allow them to check the quality of teaching in their subjects to ensure that achievement is equally strong in all areas of the curriculum.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching, especially in writing and mathematics, is consistent in enabling a higher proportion of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to reach the highest levels of attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2
- plans for improving the school's performance, including those for pupil premium spending, have measurable targets which enable governors to carefully evaluate the impact of leaders' work
- the quality of teaching and learning is checked in every subject so that leaders have a clear picture of the outcomes achieved by pupils and groups of pupils across the whole curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Brown  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I also met with the vice-chair of the governing body, two other governors and considered an email from the chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority and conducted a telephone discussion with the diocesan director of education. I visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. In three classrooms, I observed jointly with you. I spoke informally to groups of pupils during breaktime and in lessons. I scrutinised the work in pupils' books. I evaluated information in relation to pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation document, the school development plan and your arrangements for checking the performance of teachers. I reviewed the documentation linked to your work to keep pupils safe and examined the information and policies on the school's website. I considered the 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.

My key lines of enquiry for this inspection were focused on: the outcomes achieved by pupils, particularly the most able, across the school and in early years; the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged; leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment including phonics teaching; pupils' attendance and the culture of safeguarding in the school.