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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Bernadette Nesbit
Executive Headteacher
Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Kirtton Lane
Stainforth
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN7 5BL

Dear Mrs Nesbit

Short inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 May 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 October 2010.

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 high expectations of staff. A 'no excuses' culture prevails in school, where every pupil is expected to achieve no matter what their barriers to learning might be. This is helping you to improve the quality of teaching and to raise standards across all subjects.

You and your staff share high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are responding eagerly to these expectations and their attitudes to learning are a joy to behold. Pupils are friendly and open. All pupils spoken to love coming to school and enjoy their lessons.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve standards in writing. You and the head of school have worked with focus to equip teachers with the skills they need to fully develop pupils as writers and to ensure that the assessment of writing is accurate. Pupils are rising to their teachers' high standards and write confidently, using well-developed vocabulary and neat cursive handwriting. Pupils made very good progress in writing last year so that by the end of key stage 2 attainment and progress were above the national averages. Further fine-tuning of the teaching of writing has led to equally high standards in key stage 1. You have improved the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar this year, so that pupils' skills in these aspects of writing are more closely aligned to the high outcomes in writing overall.

You were also asked to improve outdoor provision for children in the early years. You and your governors have invested in play equipment and resources, creating a clean, bright and inviting environment as a result. Children were observed playing happily, using the garden and hard-standing areas under the safe supervision of adults. However, although some pupils arrive in school with underdeveloped speech and language, it was unclear how activities were going to develop children's skills in this area. Teachers had not planned all activities with enough precision to ensure that children acquire the skills and knowledge they need to achieve the early learning goals.

Safeguarding is effective.

Up-to-date policies and procedures support all staff in ensuring that pupils are safe in school. Record-keeping is of a high quality. All staff are trained to identify pupils at risk from radicalisation. Leaders have received extensive training to support pupils witnessing domestic violence, for example. Robust procedures are in place to ensure that vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and supported. The school provides pupils with many lessons on safety, reinforced by visits from other agencies like the police and fire service. Pupils report feeling very safe in school.

The work of the attendance manager and parent liaison worker to promote good attendance is relentless. Despite this, attendance remains below national averages and persistent absence remains stubbornly high.

Inspection findings

- Teachers' well-developed subject knowledge is helping them to plan sequences of learning that enable pupils to make good progress in reading and writing across key stages 1 and 2. Teachers' planning in mathematics is skilful and effective in providing stretch and challenge for all pupils but particularly the most able. Skilled teaching assistants work hand-in-glove with teachers, providing very effective support to pupils. Staff go to great lengths to provide a high-quality, stimulating learning environment. Pupils speak highly of their teachers. They say they enjoy all of their lessons but mathematics is a particular favourite.
- Assessment information for 2016 shows outcomes for pupils are improving. In the early years, the number of children achieving a good level of development has risen over a three-year period to above the national average. In Year 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check shows a rising trend and is above the national average. Pupils' progress in reading and writing in key stage 1 was slightly below national averages and progress in mathematics was above. Pupils in key stage 2 made very good progress in writing, broadly average progress in mathematics but below average progress in reading.
- You expressed disappointment in the 2016 key stage 2 outcomes in reading. As a result, you have put in several measures to reverse the trend in reading. Pupils read confidently using well-honed skills. Teachers' thorough planning is helping pupils to develop a deep understanding of what they are reading. Pupils' progress

and attainment in reading have risen throughout school because of this focus. Low-prior-attaining pupils are provided with additional reading sessions and are sensitively supported by skilled teaching assistants while in class.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge in phonics is leading to high proportions of pupils attaining the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In turn, this is helping all pupils, but particularly the least able boys, to make better progress in key stage 1.
- In 2016, low proportions of boys left the early years with a good level of development. Careful teaching and thoughtful use of class texts has helped boys to make more rapid progress than girls, effectively diminishing differences, so that boys are attaining similar standards to girls in reading and writing. Boys have attained higher standards than girls in mathematics.
- You regularly hold your teachers to account for the progress of pupils but a focus on individual pupils has left you unclear about the progress of groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. The raft of current assessment systems in use by the school is producing a confusing picture.
- You and your staff have worked with great success to ensure that pupils receive a varied and balanced curriculum. Books show many opportunities for pupils to develop their writing, for example in history and in religious education. Teachers ensure that science is planned carefully to enable pupils to develop scientific enquiry skills and there is much opportunity for experiential learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- Holy Family pupils are a credit to the school. During the inspection, many approached me to ask if I was enjoying being in their school. Pupils behave very well in the playground and around school and their behaviour in lessons is excellent. Pupils demonstrate knowledge of different faiths and emphasise that they are happy in school. You have ensured that pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is well developed, adding significantly to the tolerant, respectful ethos that prevails around the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop clarity in assessment processes to enable leaders to track the progress of all groups of pupils
- planning and provision in the early years is further improved to ensure that it more precisely meets the needs of individual children
- they work more intensively with parents, carers and the local authority to reduce the number of school days missed by pupils who are persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I was able to discuss the work of the school with you and the head of school. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. I was able to look at pupils' work in books and to speak with pupils throughout the day. Discussions with the vice-chair of the governing body helped to provide me with additional information. School documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website were also considered. The views of 13 parents were taken into account through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I also looked at the responses of six staff to the online questionnaire.