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Mr John Devlin
Executive headteacher
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Dear Mr Devlin

Short inspection of Our Lady of Victories Catholic School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in April 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 express a commitment to ensure that pupils' experiences at primary school are 'the best years of their lives'. You, your governors and staff are resolved to offer a school that is 'safe, creative and exciting'. Together, you plan learning and experiences that are memorable for pupils. Pupils spoken to chatted excitedly about the recent Year 6 trip to Amsterdam, for example.

You are well supported by the head of school and subject leaders. Together, you have thoroughly analysed the performance of the school and have clarity about the impact of teaching. This enables you to account honestly for the work of the school so that academy councillors can hold you to account effectively.

In 2015, the progress of pupils from key stage 1 to 2 was very good. Our Lady of Victories was ranked in the top 25% of schools for progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2016, pupils made good progress in writing and mathematics, but progress in reading was below national averages. In 2016, the progress of key stage 1 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, was above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. There has been a three-year rising trend in the proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics screening check, but despite this, numbers are still below national averages. Current assessment information held by the school shows that almost all groups of pupils are achieving better outcomes. However, disadvantaged pupils are not making the same rapid rates of progress as other pupils.

Pupils behave very well around school and in lessons. They are respected by their teachers and respect their teachers in return. Pupils are proud to be part of Our Lady of Victories and embrace the school values of 'love, forgiveness, trust and acceptance'. Pupils told the inspector there was no bullying in school and anyone misbehaving would lose playtime as a result. Pupils in key stage 2 enjoy receiving online tokens and pupils in key stage 1 value 'house point' rewards. Pupils particularly look forward to achieving a 'family award' in recognition of doing something of note that their whole family can benefit from.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured all staff are kept up to date with the latest guidance through regular training. Staff are trained to identify signs and symptoms of abuse but also to be alert to potential radicalisation of pupils. Your record-keeping systems enable you to identify quickly patterns in pupils' attendance or behaviours that may signal a concern. Pupils are taught how to keep safe through a well-planned series of citizenship lessons. The police and agencies, such as Barnardo's, visit school each year to supplement safety messages.

You have rigorous procedures in place to promote full attendance. As a result, attendance is above the national average and persistent absence is well below that seen nationally.

Inspection findings

- Children arrive at Our Lady of Victories with skills and abilities below those typically seen for their age. Because of well-planned teaching, children make good progress. The leader of the early years is urgent and resourceful in her drive to improve the quality of provision and teaching in the setting. Staff have created an inviting environment that enables children to develop their skills across the full range of early learning goals, both indoors and outside. The leader has developed assessment systems that enable her and other early years staff to identify gaps in children's learning and to adjust planning quickly to meet the needs of individual children. Supported by efficient recording systems, she has a well-developed understanding of the needs of children in her care. Despite this, girls are making better progress and achieving a good level of development at a more secure rate than boys. Consequently, some boys have not developed the skills they need to succeed in Year 1, particularly in reading and writing.
- Teachers benefit from regular training and planning meetings with teachers from your partner school. They have high expectations of how pupils will behave in lessons and have thus developed successful relationships with pupils. Teachers share your determination to ensure pupils have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of subjects. Pupils are particularly proud of creating podcasts for broadcast on the school 'radio'. They enjoy recording their own 'ten minute tales' and listening to the stories of other pupils, parents and grandparents.
- You were disappointed in the 2016 outcomes in reading in key stage 2, but quickly set about understanding what was needed to ensure pupils succeed in

reading this year. You and your staff have introduced more rigorous processes for teaching reading, working with focus to develop pupils' vocabulary and enabling them to further develop reading comprehension. As a result, pupils are now demonstrating higher-order reading skills more frequently and effectively. Pupils really enjoy books. The leader for literacy, encouraged by training and the chance to look at practice in the school, alongside a consultant, has worked with intent to develop the teaching of reading across the school. Teachers have improved the provision for reading. Consequently, pupils' progress and attainment in reading has accelerated this year so that higher proportions of pupils are working at standards expected for their age.

- The literacy leader has supported teachers to develop a more consistent approach to teaching phonics. Outcomes have risen over the last three years, but remain below national averages at both Year 1 and Year 2. Pupils are now more confidently using phonics to read and write unknown words. However, not all work is appropriately pitched to match the needs of pupils in phonics lessons, leading to a slower pace of learning for low-ability pupils and the most able.
- Pupils' books show that in some classes, pupils demonstrate stamina for writing and some present their work well. Growing numbers of pupils in key stage 2 are using imaginative vocabulary and language conventions with confidence. However, some pupils, particularly boys, are not consistently writing pieces of sufficient quality to show convincingly that they are working at standards expected for their age.
- Below-average proportions of pupils attending Our Lady of Victories are disadvantaged. Although disadvantaged pupils achieved as well as others in key stage 1 in 2016, they did not achieve as well as other pupils nationally at the end of key stage 2. In response, you requested an audit of the pupil premium spending and have taken swift action to put in place the recommendations. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is tracked carefully and teachers are regularly held to account so that something can be done quickly if pupils start to fall behind. However, disadvantaged pupils continue to lag behind others in reading, writing and mathematics, with the largest difference being in reading.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the quality of teaching in phonics so that pupils of all abilities make rapid progress
- differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, especially in key stage 2, and others are diminished in all subjects, especially in reading
- all pupils, but particularly boys, develop their stamina for writing and are regularly able to independently demonstrate their skills in writing, across a range of subjects in the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy council, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds (RC), the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Bradford. 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. I heard pupils read. Discussions with the school improvement partner and two members 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 taken into account. The views of 30 parents were taken into account through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took into account the views of 20 staff and nine pupils through online questionnaires.