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Mrs Emma Jackson  
Headteacher  
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School  
Todholes Road  
Cleator Moor  
Cumbria  
CA25 5DG

Dear Mrs Jackson

### **Short inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2018, 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 February 2014.

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

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

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You continue to be an inspirational headteacher who leads by example in your many and varied roles, including being an executive headteacher of another school. You and your deputy headteacher ensure that staff morale is high by valuing all that they do and making sure that everyone works together as a team. You set challenging targets to enable pupils and staff alike to reach their full potential. You state on your website that you 'provide a stimulating and vibrant learning community', and you certainly do.

You, senior leaders and governors have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. The school improvement plans include precise actions to make sure that all pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education, and for life generally.

At the previous inspection in 2014, inspectors asked the leadership team, including governors, to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching. The quality of

teaching over time is never less than good and often better. This is because you ensure that there are many opportunities to share best practice, both across and beyond the school. You and each member of the senior leadership team have considerable expertise and work with teachers in other schools to improve their practice.

You place a high priority on training to keep your staff up to date. Teachers provide bespoke challenges for individual pupils and records of pupils' progress are accurate and detailed. The impact of this has led to a rise in achievement of all groups of pupils as they move through the school.

Inspectors also asked you to develop more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in using technology and mathematics across a range of subjects. Your teachers are exceptionally innovative in the way they work together to identify opportunities for learning across a range of topics. For example, through a topic on disasters, those pupils researching information about the Titanic explored the ratios of deaths among the different classes of travellers, using their mathematical skills. The ratios prompted debate among pupils about the impact of social class during this period in history. Scrutiny of pupils' topic work shows how skilfully teachers provide opportunities to develop pupils' research skills and presentations of their work. This has resulted in improvements in pupils' achievements in mathematics and strengthened pupils' abilities to use technology across the school and at home.

You and the staff ensure that children get off to a good start in early years. Many children have skills that are lower than you would expect for their age, particularly in speech and language, and in personal development and social skills. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development was close to the national average in 2017. The proportion of pupils reaching expected standards by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than the national average in 2017. Similarly, those reaching higher standards in each of these subjects was also higher than the national average.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and love learning. This is reflected in high levels of attendance by the vast majority of pupils. Parents and carers commented on how appreciative they are that 'staff nurture the whole child' and parents see your school as 'a major building block to children's futures'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader, and together with the two deputy designated safeguarding leaders, you ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start of the inspection, it was clear for me to see the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high

profile. You provide staff with regular training that is up to date, so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You and the deputy designated safeguarding leaders are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. Together, you diligently follow up all concerns and make sure that pupils are kept safe. You work well with a range of external agencies to secure expertise to support pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. You and your staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

## **Inspection findings**

- As part of this inspection, I looked at the opportunities for children in early years and key stage 1 to develop their writing skills. In early years, staff plan activities to develop speaking, listening and writing skills in all the activity areas, both outdoors and in the classroom. For example, the teacher worked with a group of children in the Reception class to retell their recent trip to a forest. Encouraged by the teacher to recount their experience using full sentences, pupils used the photographs of the trip to recount the order in which they engaged in different activities. Staff effectively encourage this type of activity to develop pupils' writing skills. Children check their own work using, for example, the pictures of a finger to ensure that they have used finger spaces between words. Similarly, pupils' books in Year 1 demonstrate the raft of opportunities to build their vocabulary and then embark on writing. It was impressive to hear pupils' understanding of gravity when they wrote postcards describing their trip to the moon. Teachers and teaching assistants provide many opportunities for pupils to engage in conversations and share ideas which, in turn, support their writing skills.
- I also looked at how effectively leaders and managers are monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Within school, you ensure that all staff regularly undertake peer-to-peer observations and engage in coaching. Senior and middle leaders observe lessons, carry out learning walks, undertake work scrutinies and moderate the accuracy of teachers' assessments. You have continued to build an exceptionally skilled leadership team who are highly ambitious for every pupil. This has enabled the deputy headteacher to effectively manage the school when you are carrying out your executive headteacher role at another school. Every senior leader delivers training for other schools, based on their specialisms, and this illustrates the exceptionally high quality of leadership and management, at all levels, in your school. The impact is seen in how well pupils are prepared for the next stage in their education by the time they leave Year 6. You and your leadership team know that they need to sustain this level of monitoring to ensure that pupils continue to reach their full potential.
- You ensure that the curriculum offers an extensive range of learning experiences including trips to towns, cities and to the theatre. Teachers give freely of their time to organise residential opportunities to outdoor-education centres. They have built links with a school in Manchester with a mainly Asian population, so that older pupils get a first-hand experience of the range of cultures and faiths in Britain today. Pupils told me how much they enjoy opportunities to explore places

that are different to their local community. You and leaders ensure that all aspects of the primary curriculum are covered and there is an appropriate balance between subjects. A raft of extra-curricular activities, such as choir, nature, cooking and robotics clubs, take place after school and these supplement and extend pupils' learning. Parents commented on the way that 'pupils have a real love of learning and the teachers really capture children's imaginations'. Teachers ensure that topics are used to link subjects together and bring learning to life. You and the staff are highly skilled in finding ways to motivate pupils and, as you state on your website, 'make learning irresistible'.

- Finally, I was very taken with the behaviour of pupils. They are a credit to you in the way in which they show a deep level of respect towards each other, the adults around them and to visitors to the school. All pupils are hungry to learn new things and develop new skills. You and your leadership team go to great lengths to identify and reduce any barriers to learning. This enables all pupils to get the best possible start in life, both in their personal development and academic achievement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of children in the early years reaching a good level of development continues to increase
- pupils at key stage 1 and key stage 2 continue to achieve as well as they possibly can.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning jointly with you and the deputy headteacher. I held meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, members of the governing body and with you as the designated safeguarding leader and two deputy safeguarding leaders. I analysed 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I also took account of 24 free-text responses from parents. I analysed the 11 staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and spoke to several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons and analysed the nine pupil questionnaire responses. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; pupils' work and their reading logs.