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Mr Harry Rowan  
Executive Headteacher  
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mr Rowan

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

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018 with Cathy Morgan, Ofsted Inspector, 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 November 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You work productively with the whole school community to create a warm, friendly and welcoming ethos that is highly valued by others. You work closely with staff, pupils and parents to ensure that the school is at the heart of the community that it serves; there is a tangible team spirit.

St Patrick's offers a high level of pastoral care for all pupils and staff, but particularly for pupils who have additional needs. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. Parents value how visible you and your leaders are around the school and how well their children are known and valued as individuals. Parents spoken to during the inspection and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire were very positive about the school. Comments included: 'I find the school incredibly supportive', 'a caring community which focuses on the whole child' and 'family orientated, positive values and community feel'.

Leaders and governors have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. Together, working as a highly effective partnership, leaders are determined to improve the school further, on what one governor affirmed is your 'journey to outstanding'. Leaders have high expectations of what they and your staff can achieve, while being mindful and realistic about staff workload. Governors are committed to the school and to the community.

They provide a very good balance of support and challenge.

The previous inspection report identified that pupils did not have enough opportunities to practise a range of writing styles across all subjects. Teachers' expertise in the planning and assessment of writing has been sharpened and adults now make sure that pupils have more frequent chances to write purposefully across the curriculum. Leaders have ensured that tasks are closely matched to the ability of pupils. Pupils are also encouraged to edit and improve their work. As a result, pupils are developing more complex approaches to vocabulary and grammar. However, the quality of pupils' handwriting is variable. In some classes pupils do not consistently take enough care over their handwriting and presentation. The actions that you have taken have improved outcomes in writing by the end of key stage 2. However, the most able pupils do not consistently demonstrate their ability to write at greater depth and, as a result, do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and behave very well. They listen carefully to their peers and teachers, showing a great deal of respect for others. They focus well in lessons. The school's work means that pupils think carefully about their responsibilities and how to treat others kindly. Pupils respond to adults' requests willingly. They make the most of the opportunities to apply for voluntary roles, such as members of the school council and Mini Vinnies (pupils who support the local community). Pupils talk proudly of the work they are undertaking to introduce a memorial prayer garden, a friendship stop in the playground and of their visits to a local care home. These opportunities help pupils to develop leadership skills and understand concepts such as democracy and supporting others. Pupils are very well prepared for secondary school and beyond.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your committed staff work well to ensure that safeguarding is of the highest quality. In particular, your work and the work of your head of school as designated safeguarding leaders is impressive. Staff know pupils and their families well and listen actively to their views. All parents who made their views known expressed confidence in the school's ability to protect and care for their children effectively.

Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school and that there is always an adult they can go to for help. One pupil told me that if any pupil at St Patrick's has a problem 'they can always go to the headteacher because he is kind and always helps people'. Pupils say that bullying does sometimes happen, and that occasionally other pupils are unkind. However, they say that this is rare, and they are confident that any incidents are dealt with effectively.

Staff are fully trained and kept up to date with the latest guidance and advice to keep pupils safe. As a result, all staff are vigilant and know how to effectively look after pupils in a wide range of complex situations. Leaders work effectively

with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils are supported. Documentation shows, however, that leaders and governors do not ask enough searching questions of candidates at interview. You took clear action during the inspection to ensure that questions about safeguarding and the protection of children are a documented feature across the federation.

## **Inspection findings**

- Your pupils and supportive parents are a considerable strength of the school. Most parents hold your work and leadership in high regard. Your 'safe and effective learning environment', 'inclusive ethos' and 'approachable and considerate staff' are highly valued. Throughout the inspection, pupils demonstrated your high standards and school code of conduct. They were always polite and helpful; they showed that they work hard and treat everyone equally.
- Pupils' attendance is above national averages. You describe your approach to attendance as 'old school'; you invite parents in. You talk to and meet with parents on a regular basis and challenge families to ensure that their children attend regularly. You and your governors are not complacent and recognise that encouraging and promoting good attendance is an important aspect of the work of the school.
- Staff in the early years, including leaders, have an excellent knowledge of pupils' welfare needs and offer strong pastoral support. Relationships between children and adults are positive. Children are mature and demonstrate a wide range of language skills and vocabulary. A good focus on language development ensures that children are able to articulate their needs well. Teachers use stimulating resources to encourage children to sound out single letters accompanied by actions. The outdoor area has been redesigned to stimulate learning, with a focus on the engagement of boys. However, the proportion of boys achieving a good level of development and the proportion of most-able pupils exceeding this by the end of Reception is below the national average.
- In key stage 1, strong phonics teaching is beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes. Pupils are better able to write at length, with correct punctuation and spelling of common words. A focus on applying learned skills and the consistent use of phonics provides challenge for the most able and supports the lower-attaining pupils. Teachers' actions demonstrate a positive emphasis on developing boys' interest in writing, including activities such as 'dear diary' and 'storm poem'. However, in 2017 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check was below the national average and this trend has continued in 2018.
- Evidence from pupils' work and visits to lessons confirm that teaching and learning across key stages and subjects remain good. In a Year 6 class, for example, pupils were learning about symbolism and personification in English through both image and narration. This captured the pupils' imaginations and encouraged them to think deeply about their learning. In Year 3, pupils were seen working on the development of non-fiction writing. Although the standard of writing was variable, pupils of all abilities demonstrated a level of

resilience in attempting to write accurately and interestingly.

- Pupils' topic books and science books show examples of teachers developing reading, writing and mathematics across the curriculum. For example, in Year 2 pupils were reflecting on their science experiment by writing sentences about what happened to the coloured sweets on a plate when water was added. Older pupils are given opportunities to complete extended pieces of writing in the wider curriculum in subjects such as science, history and religious education. However, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in writing by the end of key stage 2 is below the national average.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve the progress for boys and the most able pupils across the Reception Year
- continue to strengthen the teaching of writing so that the most able pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- regularly reinforce phonics skills in pupils' learning of reading and writing across the curriculum so that all pupils, especially boys, achieve at least in line with their peers nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Murray  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team and a group of foundation governors, including the chair of the governing body. Together, with you, we visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. We also looked in depth at pupils' writing books and other work. The other inspector visited a number of classrooms with your head of school. I met with a representative of the local authority and with the deputy director for education in the Diocese of Leeds (RC). I met with a group of pupils from Years 3 to 6. I listened to eight pupils read. I also listened informally to pupils read during my visits to lessons. Consideration was given to 48 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 29 questionnaire responses from staff.

Consideration was also given to 49 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I spoke to parents and grandparents at the start and end of the school day. I evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a sample of monitoring records. I also met with your designated safeguarding leader and reviewed documentation and records about how you keep your pupils safe. My colleague met with your special educational needs coordinator and your early years leader.