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Mr Terence Naylor  
Headteacher  
St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mr Naylor

### **Short inspection of St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 May 2019, 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 January 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, the senior leaders and staff have ensured that the school is a welcoming learning environment that serves the local community well. You have brought about improvements since the last inspection, ensuring that the school continues to provide pupils with a good standard of education. Pupils leave St Francis' fully prepared for the next stages of their education.

Your evaluation of the school effectiveness is astute. You have ensured that the comprehensive approach you take to school development planning is based on relevant priorities that are turned into actions. You know what needs to be done to improve this school further.

You have recognised that children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills much lower than those typical. Since the previous inspection, the Nursery provision has been extended to offer places to two-year-old children so that they may be better prepared for school. Children flourish and make good progress in the early years. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is improving towards to the national average year on year. Children continue to make good progress through key stage 1. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6 they have caught up with other pupils nationally. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

The school learning environment is bright and stimulating. Pupils benefit from ample

space and have access to high-quality resources. Staff celebrate pupils' achievements well in the many colourful displays and high-quality examples of their art work.

Pupils enjoy attending school. Many stated that behaviour was good. Pupils said that they feel safe while in school. They said that their teachers help them and that you and the staff are kind to them. Pupils were particularly keen to express that their concerns were listened to. They know that if they place their concerns in the 'worry box' that an adult will talk to them and act upon their concerns. Pupils enjoy the many trips and visits throughout their time in school. Older pupils spoke confidently about their trip to London, where they visited Parliament and Buckingham Palace. Pupils enjoy their break times, especially now that they have been enhanced with a range of outdoor gym equipment. They understand the need to stay fit and healthy. Pupils appreciate the wide and diverse range of clubs and activities that are offered. For example, yoga, mindfulness, handball and football. Pupils have a good understanding of safeguarding and they are aware of the dangers of sharing personal information. Through their rich curriculum experiences, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. Those that I spoke to, and those that responded to the Ofsted surveys, expressed no concerns about the behaviour or safety of the pupils while in your care. Parents were particularly complimentary about the good start that children make in the early years and the free breakfast club provision. Several parents commented specifically on how the staff have supported the individual needs of their children.

Governors know the school well. They are aware of the many strengths and areas that need further development. They hold you and the senior leaders to account well. They have successfully overseen the use and evaluation of the pupil premium funding so that disadvantaged pupils do as well as other groups of pupils. They keep a sharp eye on the use of the sport premium to ensure that active, healthy and aspirational lifestyles are promoted. For example, they recently organised an Olympic athlete to open the new key stage 2 outdoor gym equipment.

At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to improve teaching so that progress in mathematics continued to improve. Since then, pupils who were of middle ability at the end of key stage 1 have made strong progress over three consecutive years. A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is paying dividends across the school. Many pupils are regularly challenged. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. Work seen in pupils' books and evidence in school's assessment information indicates that pupils continue to make good progress in mathematics.

Inspectors also asked you to ensure that pupils knew what they needed to do to improve their work. Teachers continue to be very proactive and they question pupils well. Positive learning environments ensure that the behaviour of the pupils is good and little learning time is lost. Pupils that I spoke to were able to talk about their next stages in learning and what they needed to do to improve their work further.

However, from looking in pupils' books I could see that in mathematics pupils in key stage 2 often spell mathematical terminology incorrectly. As a result, they continue to make repeated errors in their spelling.

The development of reading and phonics in key stage 1 has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy their reading lessons. Teachers are skilful and ensure that lessons build logically on prior learning. Teachers promote accurate pronunciation. Pupils articulate their understanding well; as a result, they have a developing understanding of grammar and the application of higher-order spelling. Pupils in key stage 1 read well.

Inspectors also asked you to develop further the roles of middle and subject leaders. The roles of middle and subject leaders are now well developed across the school. The leader for science was able to demonstrate how a new scheme of work had been introduced across the school. Through working with the teachers and engaging in professional development activities, teachers now have a better understanding of the sequencing of teaching and the acquisition of skills and knowledge over time. The leaders for the early years have successfully overseen the introduction and development of provision in the early years for two-year-old children. Both leaders work closely with colleagues from partner schools to share good practice. Leaders make regular checks on the quality of work in pupils' books; they observe lessons and monitor what teachers have planned for their classes. As a result of their actions, the wider curriculum is carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils and ensure continued improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in these areas.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is given the highest priority. You, along with the staff, have ensured that you actively promote a culture of vigilance. Staff that I spoke to were clear in their responsibilities: they articulated the understanding of their training well. Staff receive regular updates in their safeguarding training. They have received training on the 'Prevent' duty and this helps them spot potential signs of radicalisation. You engage successfully with several partner agencies, including the attendance team, children's social care and the police, to ensure that pupils remain safe.

You make careful checks on the suitability of adults who work in school. You and the safeguarding team are very knowledgeable about the complex needs of vulnerable pupils and their families; this helps you to provide appropriate levels of support.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection I focused on three lines of enquiry. The first of these related to attendance. Since the previous inspection, pupil absences and rates of persistent absences have increased. You have developed a proactive stance to improve attendance. Good attendance is celebrated and rewarded well. You have worked in close partnership with the local authority to bring about improvements

in this area. As a result, you have lowered the rates of persistent absence by almost 25% when compared to the same time last year. Despite these efforts, you have not used your analysis of attendance data to help you bring about more rapid improvements. As a result, absence rates and occurrences of persistent absence remain above the national average.

- The second area that I focused on related to pupils' writing in key stage 2. Writing outcomes for pupils leaving Year 6 improved last year compared to weaker outcomes in 2016 and 2017. You have ensured that writing continues to be given a high priority in key stage 2. From looking at samples of work and talking to pupils, I could see that they enjoy writing and have many opportunities to develop their skills across the curriculum. Pupils write successfully across a range of genres and subjects. For example, in geography they consider the customs of people in different parts of the world, and in science they write detailed accounts of their experimental work. In history they wrote about their trip to see the Terracotta Warriors on display in a major museum. Pupils in Year 6 particularly enjoyed writing persuasive letters to you, setting out their arguments for having some school hamsters. They were successful and now enjoy the benefits of writing for purpose. Due to a consistent approach to the teaching of writing in key stage 2, most pupils are making good or better progress.
- The final area that I looked at during the inspection related to reading. The progress that pupils have made in reading for the past three years at the end of key stage 2 has improved consistently. You have immersed the pupils in a wide range of reading experiences through many visits from local and well-established authors. Reading is promoted well throughout the school, both in the library and in the classrooms. Pupils enjoy completing online reading challenges. Pupils were able to talk about some of their favourite authors. Those that I heard read had books that were appropriately challenging. However, through discussion with pupils it became apparent that they would like even more access to the school library and to have access to a wider choice of books.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve attendance and cut rates of persistent absences
- they provide pupils with even more opportunities to access a wider range of books in the school library
- they ensure that teachers provide pupils with support to improve spelling of subject-specific vocabulary, particularly in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. I met with the leader of the early years and the science coordinator. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority.

Together we visited classes in each key stage. I spoke to pupils about their learning and viewed samples of their work. I spoke to pupils informally at lunchtime and heard pupils from key stage 2 read.

I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central safeguarding record. I examined records of safeguarding training. I examined the school self-evaluation and school improvement plans.

I spoke to parents before school, I considered the eight parental free-text responses and the 13 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I took into account the 54 responses to the pupil survey and the 15 responses to the staff survey.