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Mrs Nicola Rielly
Executive headteacher
Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Rielly

Short inspection of Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 2016, 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school thrives under your executive leadership and direction. The shared leadership and governance arrangements across the Our Lady of Furness Catholic Federation allow for the fruitful sharing of expertise and effective practice. Staff work together successfully; they share your vision and have high ambitions for the pupils. The warm 'family feel' of the school is prized by staff, parents and pupils. You ensure that pupils' personal development is nurtured and maintain high expectations for their achievement. Pupils grow in confidence, achieve above-average standards and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Staff have dealt with the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection successfully. The new assessment system is used to plan teaching that meets the learning needs of pupils. It is used effectively by leaders to check that all groups of pupils, including the most able, the disadvantaged, those who need to catch up and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points. Teachers apply the school's marking policy well and their feedback provides pupils with clear guidance to extend their knowledge and understanding. There are a few occasions when pupils' self-marking needs to be checked more closely, however.

Pupils of all abilities make good progress from their starting points because they are taught effectively and experience a broad and relevant curriculum. The vast

majority of pupils who are currently in school are working at or above the standards expected for their age in each year group. Those who need help to catch up are supported effectively through programmes, with a focus on early help. The impact of such interventions is checked closely by the special educational needs coordinator and support is adapted appropriately. Your effective tracking system shows that pupils in these groups make progress from their starting points that compares favourably with that of other pupils nationally. Their success is due to targeted teaching that takes full account of pupils' prior learning and reduces barriers to achievement.

Since the last inspection you have ensured that the most able pupils are identified early and that, along with all other groups, their progress is checked each half term to make sure they are making the best possible progress. The most able pupils are taught effectively; teachers make sure they are challenged and provide activities that deepen pupils' learning. Consequently, there have been increasing proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards in standardised tests. The most able pupils I spoke to were enthusiastic about their learning, saying that they 'work hard but learning is usually lots of fun'.

The Nursery, which opened in 2014, is having a positive impact, so children in the current Reception Year started with knowledge and skills at or above those that are typical for their age. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the early years increased significantly in 2015 to above average. Phonics teaching is well organised and highly effective. The proportion of pupils who reach expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening is consistently above average. Pupils consequently have firm foundations on which to develop further reading and writing skills.

Attainment in standardised assessments in mathematics, reading, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling has been in line with or above the national average for several years and this trend is continuing for pupils currently in the school. In 2016, pupils did particularly well in reading and writing at the end of Year 6; the proportions reaching the expected and higher standards were well above the national average for 2016. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in mathematics was above the average, although a few pupils did not do as well as expected. You have analysed the papers carefully and are ensuring that teaching for pupils currently in school addresses the areas found to be weaker, namely pupils' ability to quickly recall and apply their knowledge of number fluently.

You have excellent links with parents, established through your welcoming approach. Parents' comments frequently refer to the excellent communication, stating, for example, that 'staff are approachable and communicate issues or concerns and praise quickly and regularly'. The vast majority are extremely pleased with the quality of teaching, personal development and the progress of their children. Typical comments include: 'The staff really understand the children and create a safe, happy, caring school.' Homework is well planned and parents are provided with high-quality advice to support learning at home.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a culture in school where staff and pupils feel safe and valued. Parents find the school inclusive and welcoming, especially to the children who join it part way through a year. Your risk assessments are thorough and the systems to ensure safe recruitment of staff are effective. The policies and systems to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose and all staff and governors have completed basic safeguarding training relevant to their roles. Consequently, they are able to recognise vulnerabilities in pupils and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. Your policies take account of relevant legislation, but not all staff are aware of the legislation itself. They have not all read Part 1 of 'Keeping children safe in education', and this is identified as a next step. Staff and governors are aware of the 'Prevent' duty but have yet to complete training.

Pupils are taught about risks and how to keep safe in subjects across the curriculum. They develop a good understanding of how to keep safe when online and are aware of potential dangers outside of school. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and are sure that it is very rare in school. They know what to do if they ever feel bullied and are confident that staff will help them to deal with any concerns they might have. Pupils throughout the school behave safely and show respect for each other. Children in the early years cooperate and socialise happily.

Inspection findings

- You provide inspiring strategic leadership. Your effective delegation of leadership responsibilities makes the best use of expertise across the two federated schools, so leaders at all levels make a good contribution. Senior leaders have an aspirational vision for excellence for every child.
- The highly effective partnership extends beyond the federation to work within the 'Small Schools Partnership' and the Catholic cluster in the local area. Schools within these clusters share training and good practice on a regular basis. You also seek challenge and advice from independent consultants, which ensures that the school continues to develop. The local authority provides minimal monitoring support through the moderation of assessments, which is appropriate as the school has a strong capacity to sustain the good quality of education.
- Governors know the school well. They have a good understanding of the data and are rightly proud that the pupils at their school achieve good outcomes and enjoy learning. They have recently examined how they can provide more challenge for leaders and ensure that questions and responses are recorded in governing body minutes. Governors are also aware that they could provide more challenge, for example by making sure that additional funding is having a good impact and checking that the website, policies and procedures take account of the most recent guidance.
- Your self-evaluation is accurate and development planning is focused on the most important priorities to secure further improvement. The effective management of teachers' performance and good-quality professional development ensure that teaching continues to improve and is vibrant and interesting.

- The school's motto, 'Fire the imagination', is reflected in lessons and planning across the curriculum. Pupils receive an interesting curriculum that is enriched with themed days, visits and visitors to the school.
- Teachers' in-depth knowledge of the pupils, effective assessment and good subject knowledge ensure that teaching meets their learning needs. The quality of explanation, questioning and oral feedback are particular strengths. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and have good skills.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and their understanding of British values are strengths. Pupils are consequently prepared for life beyond school and show respect and understanding of faiths and cultures different from their own.
- The pupil premium (additional funding provided to the school for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or in the care of a local authority) is spent appropriately to help pupils catch up with learning or enhance their experiences. However, the barriers to learning and impact of the spending are not analysed as effectively as they could be, particularly with regard to disadvantaged pupils who are also in the most able group.
- The additional sports funding is used to broaden pupils' participation and extend the skills of teachers and pupils.
- Attendance is broadly average. The vast majority of pupils have excellent attendance and you are working effectively with families to ensure that the small minority who are persistently absent receive the support they need to get to school.
- Staff promote pupils' positive attitudes to learning by making sure that lessons are interesting. The activities that are planned have the right amount of challenge to build on what pupils know and can do, whatever their ability. The vast majority of pupils listen attentively and stay on task during lessons. The small minority who struggle to sustain concentration are supported effectively.
- Pupils are courteous and behave sensibly around the school. The behaviour policy is applied consistently so rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with fairly and effectively. There have been no exclusions in the last four years.
- Good teaching in the early years ensures that children get off to a good start and are prepared well for their move into Year 1. Provision and children's outcomes have improved with the introduction of the Nursery and the effective arrangements to share leadership and expertise between the two schools in the federation. The Reception class in particular provides children with stimulating activities both indoors and in the outdoor area, that help children to develop into active, creative and independent learners.
- The Nursery provision is at an earlier stage of development but is already having a positive impact. Adults are adept at providing timely prompts to help children develop their language and learning in all areas. However, the next steps in learning are not captured as effectively in children's assessments as they are in the Reception class.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the Nursery provision continues to develop so that the environment reflects the rich and stimulating environment in the Reception class; and assessments focus on the next steps in children's learning
- they continue the drive to improve pupils' quick recall of number facts and apply this knowledge fluently to calculations and problems
- they keep abreast of recent guidance, for example regarding requirements for reporting on the impact of the pupil premium; and ensure that all staff have read Part 1 of 'Keeping children safe in education'.

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

Jean Olsson-Law
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I had meetings with you and senior leaders, five governors, and an independent consultant who provides support for school improvement planning. I had a telephone conversation with a local authority adviser.

I visited the school's four classes, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils. I met with six pupils and spoke to others during lessons. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school and took account of 39 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. I took account of 21 responses to the online questionnaire for staff. I looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and at your self-evaluation and action planning. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe and records of training, safeguarding checks and behaviour management.