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Mr Austin Manfredi  
Headteacher  
Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Warton  
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Dear Mr Manfredi

### **Short inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Warton**

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 the school was judged to be good in October 2013.

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

You, the wider leadership team and governors have ensured that the school is once again providing a good quality of education after a recent decline in standards.

You and governors describe difficult relationships within the teaching and leadership staff that took its toll on teaching in this small school of only four classes. This mostly affected pupils who started in the Year 5/6 class in September 2015.

Pupils currently in Year 6 describe weak teaching from a range of temporary teachers that they had while in the Year 5/6 class last year. This weak teaching particularly affected Year 6 pupils who took their national tests at the end of key stage 2 in May 2017. The combination of disrupted leadership and weak teaching has resulted in declining results over the past two years. The progress that Year 6 pupils made last year in mathematics and in writing was poor. You have made effective changes so that current progress in every class is good or better.

The governors have appointed a new deputy headteacher and you have completely reorganised the teaching staff. This has had a transformational effect on the morale of teachers and the quality of teaching. Every teacher is determined to do the very best they can for their pupils. The good quality of teaching that existed from Reception to Year 4 is being maintained. Pupils in Year 6 are catching up quickly with learning they had missed out on last year.

Good standards in reading were maintained through the recent turbulent times because pupils get such a good foundation to their reading in Reception and in key stage 1. Reading for pleasure is encouraged throughout the school.

The promotion of pupils' personal development has been unwaveringly strong over many years. As a result, Holy Family pupils have a strong moral code and their behaviour is excellent. They are extremely well looked after, safe and happy in school.

The disruption to the school over the past two years has limited the improvements that were required in the previous inspection report. During this time, leaders were slow to take decisive action to address declining standards. You are now in a much stronger position. You have an effective new system to monitor pupils' progress and you use this well to ensure that all pupils are making good progress. Although you now identify earlier any slowing of progress and intervene more quickly to address weaknesses, more could be done to improve this even further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

The very strong relationships that exist between adults and pupils in the school ensure that pupils are very well cared for. These highly positive relationships mean that pupils place a great deal of trust in adults in the school. Pupils are confident that adults will do the very best for them. Pupils will seek advice if they have any concerns. Pupils are taught how to stay safe while they are in school, out and about in their community and when using social media. Adults are very well trained to identify safeguarding concerns and even the most inexperienced know how to respond appropriately. The school works well with external agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and governors have successfully addressed leadership problems and weak teaching that led to a recent decline in standards for Year 6 pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leadership is now focused clearly on improving teaching, but more work is needed to help teachers assess how well they are performing and helping their pupils make swift progress.
- During a turbulent time for the school, good standards were maintained throughout Reception, key stage 1 and in the Year 3/4 class. Reading has always been a strength of the school.
- Currently, teaching in the Year 5/6 class is successfully accelerating progress in mathematics and writing. The teacher is ably assisted by a highly effective group of teaching assistants and a part-time teacher. There is a very clear focus on raising the standards of basic skills, particularly for the Year 6 pupils. This has reduced the amount of time pupils have been able to spend on other subjects, such as science and humanities. However, there are secure plans to address this

throughout the next and subsequent terms.

- Children join Reception with stages of development that are broadly typical for their age. Accurate assessments are made of children's development throughout their year. Recently introduced systems to assess and record children's rates of development are very effective. One app-based system enables easy sharing of information between parents and the school. The teacher says that this is making it even easier for parents to engage with school activities and their child's learning. The learning environment in Reception is stimulating, and even when children venture outside, they are encouraged to continue to develop their understanding of phonics and numbers.
- Across all classes, teachers are much more aware of the need to really push the most able and they are doing this. Teachers are given good information about how to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. These pupils make very good progress in all subjects. Teachers know which pupils in their class are considered to be disadvantaged. Leaders and teachers are becoming much better at providing specific support for these pupils to break down the barriers to learning that these individuals face. When progress slows, this is being addressed, but on occasions this does not happen quickly enough. Consequently, at a later date, pupils are having to catch up, rather than having early support to help them keep up with their peers.
- Many parents who communicated with me during the inspection by text explained how important the 'family' culture of the school is to them. Almost all comments were highly positive and praised the work of teachers and leaders in providing a safe and happy school where their children learn well. Very few parents made any negative comments. Any that did focused on a perception of bullying not being well dealt with. However, this was not the view of pupils, and an examination of school behaviour records shows that bullying is not an issue for the school. Two parents also criticised homework that their child was given and one the ease of communicating with leaders. The vast majority of parents expressed highly positive comments about the school. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were not quite as positive. However, they were broadly supportive of the school's work.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted systematically through pupils being exposed to a strong school ethos and a wide range of enriching activities. Year 6 pupils talked enthusiastically about their recent educational residential visit to the Lake District. Pupils are currently excited about their participation in Christmas activities including their nativity play.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are excellent. When in their classrooms, pupils are industrious and collaborate well with their partners. They are diligent and take great pride in their work, paying attention to detail and presentation. When moving around the school and playing outside, pupils are harmonious, empathetic and supportive of each other. Holy Family pupils are happy pupils.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should continue to drive school improvement by:

- maintaining an accurate evaluation of how well pupils are learning across all classes and subjects
- using all the relevant information they have to target support for teachers to increase rates of pupils' progress and to do so quickly so that pupils keep up rather than having to catch up
- developing teachers' skills in reflecting on their practice and accurately evaluating how well they are performing, enabling them to refine their work and accelerate pupils' progress.

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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I worked with you throughout the day. We discussed many aspects of your school, and we visited classes and scrutinised pupils' work. I met with three members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with groups of pupils during their breaktime. I scrutinised school documents, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching. I examined child protection information. I took account of 30 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I considered the views of 28 parents who texted me their comments.