

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Mark Ryan  
Executive Headteacher  
Christ The King Roman Catholic Academy  
Tedder Avenue  
Thornaby  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS17 9JP

Dear Mr Ryan

### **Short inspection of Christ The King Roman Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Catholic Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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 May 2015.

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

You were appointed as executive headteacher of the school in September 2017, following the departure of the previous headteacher and deputy headteacher. Your strong belief that all pupils deserve an 'amazing curriculum' that is filled with rich learning experiences is the hallmark of your leadership. Colleagues from your other school have provided support and advice to staff to embrace the planning freedoms you have given them. This is enabling staff to plan lessons that are thoughtful and stimulating. For example, pupils in Year 6 were working collaboratively as secret agents to 'crack the code'. High levels of pupil enjoyment and enthusiasm were clear to see. Pupils were determinedly using and applying their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve tricky problems, while carefully checking and recording their answers to ensure accuracy. It is testimony to your strong and supportive leadership that your staff have risen to the challenges you have set them. You have successfully nurtured an enthusiastic and highly reflective staff team who are confident to try new and interesting ways to 'hook' pupils into learning. They are wholly supportive of your leadership.

The trust directors appointed a head of school to support you in your efforts and to strengthen senior leadership. She took up her post in January 2018. Although only in post for a matter of weeks, it is very clear that you have quickly established a highly effective partnership with great capacity to improve the school's effectiveness to outstanding. Plans to reorganise the leadership structure of the school further have been delayed, because of budget constraints. While this is not ideal, you are using this time wisely, to consider your options moving forward. You are committed

to investing in staff and ensuring that succession planning is inherent within your leadership structure.

The special educational needs coordinator is recently appointed, and her role is shared between both of your schools. Although only in school one day a week, she has already aligned referral and support systems across the schools to ensure consistency. Assessment procedures are detailed and accurate and are ensuring that some of your most vulnerable pupils and their families are receiving the right level of support and advice effectively. She has very clear plans in place and has already acted to evaluate the extensive programme of interventions offered to pupils.

You have secured accurate assessment and use this information effectively to track pupils' progress across the year. Your in-depth analysis of pupils' assessment information gives you an accurate picture of what you do well and what you need to improve further. As a result, your school self-evaluation and your improvement plans are detailed documents that accurately reflect the priorities for further improvement. You use this information to organise additional support and interventions for pupils who may need it. You have ensured that there is a clear line of accountability from pupils' outcomes into staff appraisal objectives. This strong cycle of monitoring and review is supporting pupils' continuing good outcomes.

Pupils across the school are proud of their achievements. The pupils I talked to read their stories with fluency and expression and were keen to tell me how much they enjoyed their learning. This manifests itself in the high levels of pupils' engagement observed in lessons and in the pupils' exemplary conduct in and around the school. The strong Christian ethos, which underpins the work of the school, contributes to this significantly.

The governing body are equally committed to securing further improvement and have reviewed their practice. They share your vision and ambition to secure the best possible educational experience for all pupils. A review of their meetings shows that they question your reports and triangulate your information through external verification. However, they recognise that their own role in monitoring is too informal and that this aspect of their work is not good enough.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Systems to check the suitability of all staff are securely in place. Regular training ensures that all staff are up to date with the most recent safeguarding legislation. Staff know their pupils and families well and are diligent in noticing any changes in pupils' behaviour. They know what to do should they need to report a concern. A review of school records shows that school leaders are timely in their responses and use a range of professional partners to ensure that pupils are supported successfully.

One of your first actions upon being appointed was to secure the school site. There is now a perimeter fence, which prevents visitors from accessing various parts of the school. Procedures are now controlled effectively, with all visitors reporting to the main office. Pupils commented on how much safer they feel because of your actions.

## **Inspection findings**

- One of my first lines of enquiry was to check whether pupils' outcomes, particularly those for disadvantaged pupils, were still good. Although pupils' progress data indicated this to be the case, there was variability in the standards pupils reached, including disadvantaged pupils, boys and girls. In key stage 1 it was at both the expected and higher standard and at key stage 2 it was at the higher standard only. I found that at the start of the school year you set ambitious targets to diminish any differences in attainment between pupil groups. These look set to be achieved because you have worked determinedly throughout the year to do so. After reviewing the outcomes for pupils currently in the school, we agreed that although there is now greater consistency in pupils' outcomes at the expected standard, there is still more to do to ensure that this is replicated at the higher standard, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- I also wanted to review the teaching of writing. Although pupils' outcomes in writing were good, there was a marked difference in pupils' outcomes in reading and in English spelling, grammar and punctuation by comparison. Since the beginning of term, you have introduced a new approach to the teaching of writing. Pupils' stimuli for writing are drawn from quality texts. Pupils are then taught to identify and practise and then apply specific language features for various styles of writing. Work seen in books show that pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Pupils write confidently and accurately in a range of styles. The new handwriting policy that you introduced is supporting pupils' improved presentation, which is now of a high standard. You have successfully ironed out any discrepancies in pupils' outcomes, especially at the expected standard. This improvement has not extended to pupils' writing at the higher standard and to their writing in subjects beyond English.
- A further focus was to review the actions you have taken to improve pupils' attendance, particularly for those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and for disadvantaged pupils. A raft of procedures is in place to deal with pupils' absence. Following her appointment, the head of school has formalised these to impress upon parents leaders' raised expectations for good attendance. These procedures are in their earliest stages of implementation and consequently only slight improvements are evident. You are fully aware that your latest attendance figures are below the national average for all pupils, and that more disadvantaged and SEN pupils are regularly absent from school.
- My final focus for the inspection was to review the quality of teaching and learning in the early years foundation stage. This is because the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has declined slightly over three years, with marked differences between boys' and girls' outcomes. The early years leader has a strong understanding of early childhood development and has

sustained the purposeful learning environment reflected in the previous inspection report. She has been supported effectively by the head of school. Together they have focused their efforts into developing the outdoor learning environment and they have placed a greater emphasis upon engaging boys into learning. Assessment in the early years is accurate and is used effectively to plan activities that sustain children's interests and meet their needs. Strong and productive relationships are evident. Children explore their environment confidently and respond appropriately to adults and to each other. As a result, children are making good progress from their starting points. Current outcomes show that more children have already achieved a good level of development this year than in previous years. Although there remain differences between boys' and girls' achievement, further analysis shows that boys are making accelerated progress from their lower starting points to catch up.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils can write confidently and securely at the higher standard, and differences in the quality of pupils' writing in subjects beyond English are eliminated
- plans to strengthen leadership by developing middle leadership and formalising governors' role in monitoring are realised
- pupils' attendance improves and the proportion of disadvantaged and SEN pupils regularly absent from school reduces.

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

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and your head of school to discuss aspects of the school's work. You shared your own evaluations of the effectiveness of the school and your improvement plans. We observed pupils' learning in lessons in most classes. We reviewed pupils' assessment information and work in pupils' books.

I reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and attendance, along with reports from your school improvement advisor. I talked to pupils about their learning and heard them read during lessons and more formally at lunchtime.

I took account of the 74 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's parental inspection questionnaire, as well as the 27 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I met with two members of the governing body and the school improvement advisor.