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Mrs Elaine Allen
Headteacher
St John Vianney's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Allen

Short inspection of St John Vianney's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the deputy headteacher provide effective and insightful leadership. You have accurate evaluation skills. This means that you have a clear understanding of the school's position. There is a strong team ethos characterised by very high expectations for all the pupils in your care.

Governors work hard for their school. They are effective at holding you and other leaders to account and have a range of skills. They have an honest and realistic view of the school. They are supportive and challenging in equal measure. Teaching is good. Staff have access to a range of training. Lessons are engaging, and teachers have strong subject knowledge.

The curriculum has been recently redesigned and as a result is reinvigorated. It is designed specifically for your pupils and offers rich and vibrant learning opportunities. Pupils say they particularly enjoy trips out linked to their learning, such as to York, the circus and the local park. The core values of the school are drawn from global experiences. These include supporting a school in Nepal, explicit teaching of British values and an understanding of different faiths. As a result, pupils are kind, considerate and well informed.

Children enter the school with skills that are below those typical for their age. They make very good progress in early years. The opportunities given to the children are wide and varied. There are very productive relationships with parents and carers and other local early years providers.

Results in key stage 2 in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics were good. This was down to strong teaching and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Progress in writing and mathematics was very strong. In 2017, results in key stage 1 were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This was because of skilled teaching and effective planning. Phonics results have been particularly successful for the last three years. Current assessment information shows pupils are making strong progress, including those that are disadvantaged. Extra support is given to those who need it and enrichment activities are provided for these pupils by the school.

The teaching of writing is effective. Pupils across the school write at length and with independence. The presentation of pupils' work is excellent. One governor described the school as 'an oasis of calm' for the children. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are keen to show off their school and talk to visitors. Year 6 are proud to wear their special fleeces. Pupils say that generally relationships are very strong.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching, so that more pupils made good progress, particularly in reading by boys in key stage 2. This is something that the school is continuing to work on. Progress for boys has improved since the last inspection and pupils have access to a much wider range of reading materials. You and your leadership team acknowledge that teachers are continuing to develop the teaching and assessment of comprehension skills.

The local authority has offered a range of support over the last year. This support has been specifically targeted at ensuring the well-being of all staff. Staff, particularly senior staff, value the support they have received.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have effective safeguarding procedures in place and the well-being of all pupils is given the utmost priority. The assistant headteacher has a very clear understanding of the needs of vulnerable pupils in school. She is diligent in her management of records, which are kept secure and up to date. Staff have a clear understanding of how to keep pupils safe and they know what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of a child. Procedures for recruiting staff are robust. All appropriate checks and balances are carried out on new members of staff.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They say bullying, including prejudiced bullying, is extremely rare and if it did happen they are confident that staff would deal with it swiftly and effectively. Relationships between pupils and staff are very strong. Pupils who I spoke to say that staff keep them safe and they feel secure.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed key lines of enquiry. First, we looked at the breadth of the science curriculum. Science is taught well. It is taught regularly and there is a detailed curriculum map to ensure full coverage of the national curriculum. Pupils are given opportunities to predict, investigate and record their

experiments. There are exciting opportunities to learn scientific concepts. During the inspection, Year 2 were making slime and Reception were enjoying a bubble show. Their learning in science is enhanced by visits and visitors; for example, pupils visit the zoo as part of their topic about animals. The study of scientists is taught less frequently. However, leaders are aware of this and have plans to include more study of scientists in the curriculum for next year.

- Second, we looked at the achievement of the most able pupils in school. You and other senior leaders are fully aware that in 2017 the progress of these pupils lagged behind that of other pupils. You have acted swiftly and decisively to address this. Teachers now have higher expectations of the most able pupils. They ensure that pupils are pushed and given opportunities that challenge them. Evidence in books shows that more pupils are on track to achieve the higher standards.
- Finally, we looked at the teaching of reading. Reading is a key focus for the school because results in 2017 were not as strong as those for writing. The introduction of several new programmes has given teachers the tools with which to teach reading skills. However, across the school, but particularly in key stage 2, opportunities to teach comprehension skills are missed. This means that although some pupils read with fluency and expression they do not always have a deep enough understanding of what they have read. In addition, teachers sometimes do not have enough opportunities to assess the depth of pupils' understanding accurately.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- comprehension skills are taught explicitly across the school so that teachers' assessments are accurate.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Jackson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and other members of staff, including the deputy headteacher. I also met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I talked with pupils in a meeting and I heard pupils in Year 2 read. I took account of responses to the online questionnaires for parents, pupils and staff. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and looked at their work in books. I reviewed information about pupils' progress and attainment.

I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation document and school improvement plan and looked at safeguarding, including evaluating the impact of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe.