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Miss Sarah Deakin
Headteacher
St Francis' Catholic Primary School, Goosnargh
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Dear Miss Deakin

Short inspection of St Francis' Catholic Primary School, Goosnargh

Following my visit to the school on 7 December 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.

You were appointed as the new headteacher from September 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 show drive and energy in your successful leadership of the school. Your thoughtful work is praised by pupils, parents and governors. You use your well-informed understanding of early years and primary education to challenge staff and governors about what St Francis' Primary School is offering pupils now and in the future. Your vision and plans for the school are ambitious and well considered.

Because of your passionate and skilful leadership, the school is good and improving. Morale among staff is high. Teaching is good and pupils are achieving well. You, other leaders and governors are ably moving the school forward. Governors are informed in detail about the school and give helpful support and challenge to your work.

Pupils' learning across subjects is thought-provoking and diverse. For example, recently pupils learned much about caring for chickens, as well as how to record their Christmas songs on a CD. Special weeks focusing on topics such as the International Space Station have given pupils much knowledge and enthusiasm for science and for finding out more about the universe.

Being a small school does not hold St Francis' back from making sure that pupils benefit from a wide range of extra activities such as chess, dodgeball and tennis. Perhaps unique for a primary school, some pupils are becoming skilled in the art of fencing, using a blunted sword. In addition, there are very few schools that have such an attractive and homely school cottage. This space is used well for breakfast and after-school clubs as much as for teaching groups of pupils during lessons.

You have maintained the previous strengths of the school in that great attention is given to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. This is giving pupils a very happy, settled and calm start to their education. Pupils are extremely polite, well behaved and thoughtful towards others. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are respected and involved fully in the life of the school. Pupils willingly help make the school better and they express high levels of satisfaction, confidence and enjoyment in their learning.

Given your vision to see the school grow and flourish, you have added a pre-school to St Francis'. Staff are building quickly on young children's confidence, their language and communication skills to help them become better mathematicians, readers and writers. We discussed how improving teaching for young children outdoors will give them even greater chances of becoming skilled learners, including in their physical development.

At the previous inspection, the inspector recommended that the school raise attainment in key stage 2. Subsequently, there has been strong improvement in pupils' attainment and progress in their writing over recent years. Improvement in pupils' attainment in mathematics has been slower. Since taking up the post of headteacher, you have set in place clear steps to improve the teaching of mathematics. You have rightly made the teaching of reading a stronger focus in the school. You have identified that some pupils need to gain a deeper understanding of what they are reading and be able to explain their insights more fully to others. School information shows that because of improved teaching, pupils' achievement in mathematics and reading is now improving quickly.

Before you joined St Francis', the success of the school was hampered by many changes of leadership and management since the previous inspection. The quality of education and leadership, including governance, was not as good as it should have been. However, this is no longer the case. From the moment of being appointed, you began to learn as much as you could about St Francis', even asking local shopkeepers for their views of the school. You have worked closely with the school governing body and the local authority to understand what the school has achieved since the previous inspection. You have worked successfully to develop staff teaching skills as well as link St Francis' well with other local schools. You have taken as many opportunities as possible to broadcast online, or in person at local agricultural shows, to tell people about the renewal of your school. You have identified precisely what needs to be even better in the school and are responding quickly and with considerable success. As one governor said, 'Previously the school was under strain. Now there is laughter.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You know how to look after and share sensitive information about child protection issues. You are unafraid to chase other professionals to make sure that pupils and their families are safe. Your work with individual families shows how absolutely committed you are to protecting and caring for people within the school community. In addition, you have even gone as far as gritting local roads in person so that pupils and families arriving at school remain safe. By keeping yourself, staff and governors fully updated about changes to national guidance and requirements, you have made sure that there is a clear and shared understanding of safeguarding. For example, staff understand risks to pupils such as exposure to extremist views, sexting and neglect. Staff know how to refer any concerns that they may have about the welfare of pupils or the behaviour of adults. The safeguarding work of the school benefits from a culture of discussion and challenge between staff and with pupils and families. Key messages about how pupils and families can stay safe when online are shared frequently with pupils and families. Pupils are safe, staff are knowledgeable and there are clear arrangements to protect pupils. Nevertheless, not all of the school's agreed policies and procedures for safeguarding are reflected well in the child protection policy.

Inspection findings

- For a time, the past success of the school faltered following the previous inspection. There were a number of short-term appointments to lead and manage the school and a period when there was no headteacher in place. The combined impact of such upheaval in a small school, at a time of much change for schools nationally, led to the school struggling. There was a slip in the quality of education provided. Your appointment to the headship of the school from September 2015 halted the decline. You have transformed the school. Pupils benefit from a broad and exciting range of learning. They achieve well across subjects. Improvements in pupils' education are well planned, frequent and driving up standards. While the school is actively learning from others, there are now visitors who come to see and hear what is being achieved at St Francis'.
- Governance of the school is good. You give clear information to governors about improvements, priorities and issues. You make sure that governors have the time and insight with which to debate your reports. Because you have built a positive working relationship with governors, they are unafraid to challenge and discuss what they learn about the school. Together you have made sure that the school budget is healthy.
- Links with parents are developed well. Much information is shared about pupils' learning and how to offer support at home. You have overhauled the school website, engaged in writing a weekly blog aimed at pupils and parents and increased the level of communication with families. You have made sure that fundraising continues to be an active part of what parents do to help the school. You have raised the awareness of the local community, other schools and the media about the improvements being achieved and why St Francis' is a special

place to be educated. There is now an increased number of parents choosing, or returning to, the school to educate their children.

- Throughout the school, the quality of displays of pupils' work and the arrangement of classrooms to inspire learning is first rate. Such successful celebration of learning is because of the high expectations you have set as headteacher. There is a wholehearted commitment among staff to achieving the clear vision for improvement you have set out. Your pride in the pupils, families and staff extends not only to the quality of the school environment but also to the school chickens – about whom you are most caring. During the inspection, it was not uncommon to hear your leadership described as 'inspirational', 'passionate' and 'creative'.
- With staff, you pursue the aim of creating a family feeling within the school with considerable success. Relationships between staff and between staff and pupils are extremely positive. Pupils show great care for one another and respect differences between people, families and communities. They are gaining a strong preparation for their life in modern Britain. Pupils show exemplary attitudes to their learning. In lessons, they know very clearly how they can challenge themselves to work at a higher level. Pupils are able to give clear explanations about what they are learning and why. Video clips on the school website celebrate very positively pupils' explanations of their school. Pupils show excellent behaviour throughout the school day and over time. There are no known incidents of bullying. When all pupils in the school were surveyed recently, all of those responding said that they feel safe and that pupils' behaviour is good. Importantly, all pupils said that they can talk to an adult if they had a problem. Parents are highly satisfied with the way the school keeps children safe.
- Over time and across the school, pupils' achievement in reading has been improving. In particular, this is because there has been a successful focus on the teaching of phonics. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is consistently above the national average. Where pupils do not pass the check in Year 1, staff and leaders are careful to understand the individual reasons why not. Good help is in place within Year 2 so that pupils catch up wherever possible.
- At the end of key stage 1, between 2013 and 2015, pupils' attainment in reading was above the national average. Over the same period, in key stage 2, pupils achieved well in reading. In 2016, the attainment of boys and girls in reading in key stage 1 and their attainment and progress in key stage 2 was broadly average. However, this information cannot be compared with that for previous years as the assessments are different and national expectations of pupils have been raised. In addition, the low numbers of pupils makes it difficult for leaders to assess trends within the school. Nevertheless, careful review of pupils' achievements by leaders has highlighted the need to improve pupils' achievement in reading. You recognise the need to develop pupils' understanding of books and texts, and their ability to answer questions about what they have read. You are also focusing closely on making sure that the most able pupils are given greater challenge in their learning to read.

- As part of your clear and successful leadership of reading and phonics, a wide range of steps have been taken to improve reading this year. For example, alongside their home-reading book, pupils are completing tasks that challenge them to show in writing how well they have understood the text. Across the school, the focus on celebrating reading for pleasure has been strengthened. This is a school where books, reading and stories are used well across subjects. Pupils want to read. Parents are pleased with the school's investment in more high-quality books for pupils to read at school and home, including for the most able. School information shows early signs of good improvement in pupils' reading skills. For example, the most able current Year 6 pupils are already able to pass the reading assessment that was used nationally last year.
- The attainment of pupils across subjects in key stage 2 has risen since the previous inspection. For example, there has been a strong improvement in the standards achieved by pupils in their writing and pupils achieve well in this aspect. Nevertheless, you have identified correctly that more pupils need to achieve what is expected of them in mathematics and more pupils need to achieve greater depth in their learning. Your plans and recent actions to develop mathematics show much improvement in the school this year.
- When joining the school, you identified various issues and set about addressing them quickly and successfully. You have brought about improvement by recognising and making full use of staff expertise to support other colleagues within the school. There is now a culture of staff learning together. Thus, for example, the whole staff team check the quality of pupils' work and debate their insights together.
- You have made sure that staff access up-to-date training relevant to their individual needs. Through coordinated visits for staff to other local schools and meetings with other teachers, staff at St Francis' are finding additional support and inspiration for their work. You have supported individual staff through a clear process of setting and reviewing targets for their work. You have helped staff to understand what to expect of pupils at different ages and to become more accurate in their assessments of pupils. To create a much more shared approach to the school's broader work, you have reviewed and improved a wide range of school policies and procedures.
- Part of your vision for the school is that children attend for their education from age two years onwards. Just recently you have extended the school to include a pre-school. The pre-school classroom is arranged thoughtfully and aimed to give children lots of opportunities to learn through play, writing, talking and investigating. There are many high-quality books, selected and shared with children, to develop their understanding of rhyme, phonics and stories. Early mathematics is also a key focus for staff to help children's readiness for key stage 1. Nevertheless, the teaching of children while outdoors is less well developed and remains a priority for development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in the early years makes full use of a wide range of opportunities for children to learn outdoors
- the school child protection policy gives clear information about the wider policies and procedures that the school already has in place for safeguarding pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

To test if the school remains good, I considered some key lines of enquiry with you:

- How well is the school developing the teaching of reading?
- What has the school done to improve the quality of teaching in key stage 2 and make sure that staff learn from the practice of other teachers?
- How well is the school promoting pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare?
- Is safeguarding effective?

Throughout the inspection, you and I observed and discussed pupils' learning and we talked to pupils about their work. I reviewed your evaluations of the school, your plans for improvement and information about pupils' progress. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair, to hear about the work of the school since the previous inspection. You and I reviewed school records of checks made about staff suitability to work with children. We considered the school child protection policy together. I reviewed examples of case files about pupils, as well as evidence of your work with other professionals. During the inspection, pupils enjoyed a special morning, watching an exciting pantomime about 'Puss in Boots' performed by visiting students from a local further education college.

The inspection was observed by an Ofsted inspector, who played no part in the judgements made by HMI about the school.