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Mr M Burke
Headteacher
Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School
Hedgefield Road
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Dear Mr Burke

**Short inspection of Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 work very effectively with your governors and the deputy headteacher to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to thrive in your caring school. Your close links with the local church and the visibility of the priest in school enable the school's Catholic and gospel values to shine through and inform decisions that leaders make.

You have worked with all staff and your school's pupil council to create a new school motto, which is 'believe, achieve and succeed'. This ethos was clear to see during the inspection in the way in which teachers work to enable pupils to develop their own thinking in lessons.

In the previous inspection, the report highlighted the strength of pupils' behaviour, noting that they want to learn and do well. My observations in school confirm that leaders have maintained this strength. Inspectors from the previous inspection also highlighted some areas for further development. First, that teachers carefully plan activities to match pupils' different learning needs. Leaders have worked hard to address this issue. You have reviewed your curriculum to ensure that it considers the needs of differing groups. Additionally, teachers ensure that their planning takes account of the needs of individual pupil groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. As a

result, teachers provide effective challenge and support in lessons for pupils in order to help them make good progress.

The previous inspectors also noted that teaching should ensure that pupils progress well. There has been success in this area. Leaders monitor closely the effectiveness of pupils' lessons, including the work that they undertake. Leaders also work closely with teachers to discuss pupils' outcomes. As a result, pupils make strong progress over time from starting points which are typically low.

Finally, inspectors in 2014 noted that leaders and teachers do not always effectively deploy learning support assistants to enable them to support pupils in their learning. Leaders have been highly effective in dealing with this issue. Learning support assistants receive a broad range of training, which has been effective in enabling them to challenge pupils' thinking and move their learning forward. During the inspection, learning support assistants in all classes worked in a very positive and effective manner with pupils, asking them challenging questions to check their level of understanding and move their learning forward.

We discussed areas where further work is required to support school improvement. Although there are improvements in the teaching of reading in the early years and key stage 1, leaders are not currently evaluating and planning for improvements in this subject in as much detail as they are for other areas, such as writing and attendance. Additionally, the books that pupils in the early years and key stage 1 take home to practise their phonics and early reading skills do not routinely reflect the sounds and include the words that they are practising in school. Finally, leaders are making concerted efforts to improve pupils' attendance and reduce rates of persistent absence. While there has been evidence of success in this area for some groups of pupils, persistent absence remains a thorny issue.

**Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your school building is secure, and members of staff check visitors' details on entry. Leaders work effectively with external partners to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils in school remain safe and receive the appropriate care and support that they require. All pupils who spoke to me during the inspection and those who responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey said that they felt safe in school and that there was an adult in school they could talk to if something was worrying them.

Leaders are very thorough when checking that the school's safeguarding procedures are effective. Leaders and governors undertake regular audits of their school's systems and address action points quickly. As a result, systems to keep pupils safe are strong.

Pupils receive a broad range of opportunities to develop their awareness of how to stay safe in the real world and online. For example, a national safeguarding charity

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led workshops for pupils throughout the school. These activities enable pupils to develop a clear understanding of ways in which to protect themselves.

## Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I shared with you a number of lines of enquiry. The first considered how effective leaders' efforts have been to improve pupils' outcomes in writing throughout school. There have been many positive developments in this area. This is because leaders have worked in a highly strategic manner to bring about improvement. Your detailed evaluation of the teaching of writing has led to marked improvement to the way in which leaders support teachers and learning support assistants in developing provision for pupils in this area. As a result, pupils are motivated and enthused by the high-quality experiences that they receive.

- Improvements are evident, from a wide range of opportunities for early mark making in the early years to the regular extended writing tasks for older pupils. Teachers are successful in developing pupils' skills in writing, particularly in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Leaders identified that outcomes for girls were not as strong as those for boys. They are addressing this effectively by choosing topics to engage the interest of girls more. For example, following a drama production on the subject of suffragettes, girls produced much improved pieces of writing. As a result of leaders' focus in this area, pupils are making good progress. This is evident in the work they complete in their books and in the provisional performance information for 2018, which shows improvements in pupils' writing attainment in early years and key stages 1 and 2.

- We also looked at how effectively leaders and teachers develop pupils' reading skills in early years and key stage 1. The teaching of phonics is consistently strong across classes. Pupils receive many opportunities to practise the sounds that words make in lessons across the curriculum. For example, in the Reception class during the inspection, children developed their speaking and listening skills while singing a song with their teacher. Teachers and learning support assistants build on children's phonics skills effectively. However, while teachers encourage reading at home, the books they provide pupils with do not routinely reflect the sounds and words that they are learning in school. This limits pupils' opportunities to practise their phonics skills effectively.

- Leaders are ensuring that provision for reading is developing over time. Displays are effective in celebrating pupils' studies of a variety of authors. High-quality books are available for pupils to read in classrooms and in reading areas. However, leaders are aware that there is not a wide range of these books in some classrooms. Workshops which allow parents, carers and grandparents to work with their children on early reading skills are well supported and greatly valued.

- Teachers and learning support assistants in early years and key stage 1 provide more opportunities to develop pupils' early language, storytelling and

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comprehension skills. Such support has been very effective in extending early reading skills. In one class, pupils were highly motivated and engaged by a study of owls. They were able to talk with understanding about words and phrases such as 'nocturnal' and 'birds of prey'. As a result of this work, pupils are making good progress in their early reading skills. However, the strategic development of this subject is not sharp. As a result, leaders and governors cannot check as easily on progress towards improvement in reading as they can in other areas of school improvement, such as writing.

- My final line of enquiry considered what leaders are doing to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence. Leadership in this area has been extremely strategic in its drive to improve pupils' punctuality and attendance. Leaders and teachers reward good and improved attendance. The pupils who I spoke to during the inspection valued the encouragement they receive to improve their attendance. They show a clear understanding of the link between regular attendance at school and success in education. However, they told me that pupils are sometimes absent from school because they are taking holidays. Leaders too are aware of this issue. You take a strong stance against this and communicate this to parents. As a result, there are improvements in attendance for some groups of pupils and a reduction, over time, in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. However, there is still more to do, especially to improve the attendance of girls and for pupils who are disadvantaged.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve attendance, most notably that of girls and disadvantaged pupils, and reduce further the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school
- develop pupils' skills in phonics in the early years and key stage 1 and check that the books pupils take home enable them to practise the sounds learned in school
- sharpen the evaluation and improvement planning for reading to make it easier for leaders and governors to check on progress towards improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

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## Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with pupils about their work, their school life and their understanding of safety. I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss your school's own evaluation and its safeguarding procedures. I met with two governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and safeguarding. I also spoke with staff to discuss improvements in their subject leadership and curriculum. Finally, I met with the school's improvement partner from the local authority together with the diocesan schools' officer.

I looked at learning in books and reviewed documentation, which included action plans for subject and attendance development, your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and the school development plan. I considered 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 20 responses from the pupil questionnaire and 11 responses from the staff questionnaire. I also analysed leaders' summaries of historical questionnaires and took account of conversations with a parent and a grandparent.

I visited most classes, together with you and your deputy headteacher, to observe pupils' learning. I reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.

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