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Mrs Emma Jackson
Headteacher
St Gregory and St Patrick's Catholic Infant School
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Dear Mrs Jackson

Short inspection of St Gregory and St Patrick's Catholic Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 19 December 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the newly appointed leadership team's well-planned actions have ensured that pupils make strong progress. They are very well prepared for their next stage of education. Leaders and governors have an aspirational vision for the school. They place a strong focus on challenging pupils to achieve their very best. Staff across the school put pupils' achievements at the heart of all they do. Teachers work together with determination to identify ways to further improve learning. Pupils are encouraged to live out the school's motto, 'Achieving great things through God'.

You have created a warm and welcoming school environment. Pupils are enthusiastic and eager to learn. They develop as resilient learners who are keen to work out tricky challenges, such as problem-solving in mathematics. Members of staff know families very well. The staff greet pupils and their parents and carers warmly as they arrive at school each morning. The good behaviour of the pupils in lessons and around school continues to be a strength. Pupils treat each other with

respect and kindness. They told me that staff quickly address rare incidents of misbehaviour.

You place a strong focus on developing the skills of leaders at all levels. Leaders plan a wide range of professional development to enhance staff skills and improve teaching and learning. Staff are enthusiastic and value the frequent opportunities that they have to work together and also with professionals from other schools. Middle leaders are skilled. They use their training and knowledge to further improve teaching and learning across different areas of the curriculum, including in art, history and geography.

Governors have a strong understanding of the many strengths of the school and the areas that need to be improved further, including attendance. They keep a careful check on spending, including the pupil premium funding. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Governors make sure that the very regular training that leaders provide for staff has a positive impact on standards, including improving teaching and learning in mathematics. Governors support and challenge leaders in all aspects of the school's work. They visit the school regularly to work alongside leaders and monitor the effectiveness of their actions. Governors have ensured that safeguarding remains a strength of the school.

Parents and carers hold the school in extremely high regard. Those parents with whom I spoke, and those that responded to the Ofsted surveys, were wholeheartedly in agreement that pupils are safe and well cared for. Parents feel very well informed about their children's progress and value the high standard of education. One parent, with a view representative of many, said: 'I have nothing but praise for this school. The care, support and education that my child has received have been faultless.'

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken effective steps to address areas to improve. In mathematics, leaders have improved teaching and learning; this has raised pupils' achievements. Teachers challenge pupils by planning frequent tasks to develop their reasoning. Staff encourage pupils to explain their learning and to have a go at tricky problems. Pupils quickly develop their fluency in number by practising their skills. Teachers plan a range of practical activities to deepen pupils' understanding. Pupils make strong progress in mathematics and are very well prepared for key stage 2. The proportion of pupils reaching greater depth by the end of Year 2 has improved significantly and is now above national averages.

Across different subjects, middle leaders rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and the impact it has on learning. They check that pupils are achieving well and provide support where pupils need to catch up, including for disadvantaged pupils. Middle leaders have an accurate view of how to improve pupils' learning still further across different areas of the curriculum.

In Nursery and Reception, leaders have enhanced the quality of children's outdoor learning. The outdoor classrooms are exciting environments for children to play and explore. Children enjoy a wide range of engaging learning opportunities which

develop their skills. For example, children develop their fine motor skills through a wealth of activities, including weaving ribbons and digging in the mud area. A cosy reading area is provided for children to enjoy a range of books.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are high quality and fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that all appropriate checks are undertaken on the suitability of staff to work with children. Leaders place a high priority on keeping staff knowledge up to date. Safeguarding reminders are displayed around the school. Staff receive regular training. As a result, staff are alert to the dangers that pupils may face. Staff know families very well and provide a wide range of support and guidance when needed. Leaders work closely with other agencies and professionals to ensure that pupils get the correct level of care and support. Leaders and governors have made sure that the school site is secure. Parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these related to how well leaders use additional funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and staff work closely together to share their detailed knowledge of disadvantaged pupils. They accurately identify any barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils may have. Staff use this detailed information to plan provision which precisely matches pupils' needs. When needed, pupils are given a wide range of nurture and support to improve their well-being and social skills. Staff engage closely with families and inform them about how their children are learning. As a result, these pupils make strong progress, in line with other pupils in school. They develop their confidence, skills and knowledge.
- The second key line of enquiry was to check how regularly pupils attend school. Pupils enjoy and value their learning and most miss very little time at school. Leaders check pupils' attendance daily and follow up absences with parents. Leaders have put in place a range of support and initiatives to raise attendance for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Leaders regularly share with parents the importance of attending school regularly and strongly discourage term-time holidays. A small number of pupils are persistently absent, including some disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are proactive in working with these pupils and their families to improve attendance, including reducing term-time holidays. This is improving the attendance of some pupils, but some others miss school too regularly.
- The next key line of enquiry was to check on whether leaders have planned a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils in key stage 1. Pupils' workbooks show that leaders have planned an engaging curriculum which is broad and balanced. Skilled middle leaders ensure that pupils acquire a range of new skills and knowledge as they move through the school. Pupils enjoy frequent practical activities to support their learning, such as carrying out a range of investigations in science. In art in Year 1, pupils mixed colours with accuracy and used their

skills to paint self-portraits with precision and care. Examples of pupils' high-quality art work enhance the school environment. In geography the subject leader ensures that pupils' knowledge develops across different year groups. Pupils in Year 2 were able to name the countries and capital cities of the United Kingdom with confidence. Trips to the local area, including the seaside, enhance pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations for pupils across different areas of the curriculum. This is reflected in the quality of the work that pupils produce. Middle leaders use their regular checks on pupils' learning to identify areas to improve and to plan provision to develop pupils' skills still further.

- During my inspection, I found that across the Nursery and Reception, children are enthused and engaged in a wide range of activities which precisely match their developmental needs. During the inspection, children in Reception were playing with great excitement in Santa's grotto, wrapping Christmas presents and writing labels. Others were decorating Christmas hats with great care and attention to detail. Across the early years, children greatly enjoy their learning and play with enthusiasm, concentration and cooperation. As a result, they make strong progress from their varied starting points. The learning environments are safe, calm and nurturing. Leaders make very regular checks on children's progress and share their findings with parents. The next steps recorded in children's two-year-old checks are precise. This group of children settle quickly into school. In the Nursery class for three-year-olds, children develop their fine and gross motor skills through a wide variety of activities, including in the outdoor area. In Reception, children's workbooks show that they make rapid progress in their writing and mathematical learning. This is because children practise their skills very regularly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue in their efforts to improve further the overall school attendance and reduce rates of persistent absence, including for disadvantaged pupils
- subject leaders use their checks on learning to ensure that pupils make even stronger progress across the wider curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, middle leaders and teachers. I also spoke to four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority. I met with eight pupils from Year 2 and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons. I visited classes with you, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils.

I took account of 26 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 19 free-text responses. I also took account of 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for school staff. I met with parents before school. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan and minutes of governing body meetings. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, staff training records, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.

