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Mr John Carroll
Headteacher
St Martin De Porres Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mr Carroll

Short inspection of St Martin De Porres Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2011.

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.

You and your deputy headteacher have ensured that expectations in the school are high. All teachers want pupils to achieve the best that they can academically. You have successfully shared the belief that every pupil can fulfil their potential if given the chance to do so. Pupils say that their teachers help them to learn and that they enjoy learning because teachers make learning interesting. Pupils of all ages are keen to learn and get fully involved in the carefully planned activities provided for them.

Teachers provide challenging work for pupils of all abilities, which was not the case when the predecessor school was inspected. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their understanding before moving on to more challenging ideas and concepts when it is right for them to do so. This supports pupils in making strong progress.

You and your leaders carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. You have an accurate view of what is particularly strong and what needs to be better than it currently is. You use your accurate evaluation of the quality of education provided to put in place actions that maintain

the highly effective provision. You and other leaders have a good understanding of the difference that your actions are making to pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. Teachers are positive about how the training and development opportunities that you provide improve their practice and help pupils to achieve well.

An increasing number of children join the school at the early stages of learning English. Over the past three years, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development, which indicates that they are ready for the demands of key stage 1, has been in line with the national average. This reflects very strong progress from children's starting points.

Governors are fully involved in setting the strategic direction of the school and ensuring that the standard of education remains consistently high. They know the main priorities for improvement and provide a good balance of support and challenge to you and other leaders in order to achieve your aims.

You have successfully engaged with parents, who are extremely supportive of the school. Initiatives such as adult learning, where parents can learn alongside their children, the early years passport and the 'Wow wall', where parents of children in the early years highlight key events in their child's development, have contributed to this engagement. One parent's comment, that reflected the sentiments of many others, was: 'I feel the school has a great ethos and we are proud to be part of the school community.'

Pupils' behaviour and conduct in lessons and around the school are exemplary. Pupils are keen to learn and report that examples of behaviour that interrupts their learning are very rare. Pupils spoken to during the inspection commented on how this was a friendly school. Pastoral care is strong and your values and ethos support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A number of parents commented positively on how you and your staff support pupils' personal development and address moral issues in different areas of the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You, your leadership team and governors ensure that keeping children safe from harm has the highest priority. Parents very strongly feel that their children are safe and well cared for in school.

The checks to ensure that adults working in the school are suitable to work with children are thorough. You ensure that all staff receive appropriate and regular training so that they can recognise the signs that children are at risk of harm. Leaders and governors are aware of risks specific to your school's circumstances. Adults know when to pass on concerns. Your safeguarding leaders ensure that, when necessary, they swiftly pass concerns to external agencies. They are tenacious in ensuring that pupils and their families receive any help that they need.

Pupils spoke confidently about how they learn to stay safe online and when using

new technology. They also spoke about how they learn to stay safe in everyday situations, such as through 'scooter safety' sessions. Pupils are happy and feel safe in school. Pupils and parents are confident that, on the rare occasions when bullying does occur, teachers deal with it well. There are good relationships between pupils that support learning and promote their personal development. This contributes to the good behaviour and harmonious atmosphere evident throughout the school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was whether you have maintained an ethos where pupils feel safe to attend school and behave well. Over the past three years, overall absence has been consistently below the national average. This continues to be the case. There are no groups of pupils who are disadvantaged by high rates of absence. Teachers monitor attendance closely and your staff work well with families to help improve attendance.
- My second line of enquiry was to investigate the progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. There is evidence that pupils make strong progress in reading and mathematics and that progress in writing is strengthening in all key stages.
- You recognised that in 2017, the progress that pupils made in writing by the end of key stage 2 was less strong than in reading and mathematics. You identified that teachers' assessments of pupils writing were not always accurate. As a result, you ensured that teachers had opportunities to develop their assessment practice and check that they were accurate. However, you did not use this as an excuse for the difference in progress. You also recognised that pupils needed more opportunities to apply their writing skills in subjects other than English. These opportunities are helping pupils to develop and apply their technical skills in writing for different purposes. In the early years, leaders have ensured that all activities include an opportunity for children to practise and develop their writing.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics across the school. You have ensured that there is a consistent approach to teaching that supports pupils in becoming confident in using and applying their mathematics learning. Pupils are able to deepen their understanding and develop their ability to reason and solve problems.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Progress at the end of key stage 2 has improved over the last three years and pupils made above-average progress in 2017. In key stage 1, attainment in reading has consistently been at or above the national average. The proportion of pupils who attain the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 2 is above average. This is because, when pupils do not attain the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1, you ensure that they get specific help to improve their phonics skills or to overcome wider difficulties. During the inspection, pupils of all abilities were heard reading with fluency and confidence. They showed levels of comprehension appropriate to their current levels of attainment. Pupils used their phonics knowledge well to read and spell unfamiliar words.
- My third line of enquiry was whether pupils experience a broad curriculum and

have opportunities to learn and make strong progress in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. You ensure that pupils get the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in history and geography through topic work. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the topic work that they do and how the themes capture their interest. Leaders have carefully matched learning opportunities to these themes.

- Science includes learning and applying scientific investigation skills, as well as factual knowledge. This ensures learning is interesting and challenges pupils to use their understanding in their explanations. Pupils are very positive about opportunities to be physically active and learn other skills. The curriculum also supports pupils' creative development. For example, you have ensured that all pupils have the option to learn to play a musical instrument during their time in school. There are also displays of pupils' art work around the school, and some of this work is about to be displayed at the National Gallery.
- Opportunities to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are woven through the curriculum. For example, issues such as extinction of animals due to the impact of human activity and the impact of natural disasters on communities are covered in science and topic work. Religious education includes learning about other faiths and beliefs, as well as considering what is right and wrong.
- My final line of enquiry was about whether disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive the help that they need to overcome any barriers to learning and make good progress. Published information shows that disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 made progress in line with that of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 1 was broadly in line with that of others nationally in reading and mathematics, but lower in writing. Fewer children who are eligible for free school meals attained the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of the early years than other children in the school. In 2016, key stage 2 pupils who had SEN and/or disabilities made progress in line with pupils with similar starting points. In 2017, this group was too small to draw any firm conclusions about their progress.
- The leaders responsible for the pupil premium funding and SEN ensure that they accurately identify the help that pupils need. They target funding so that it addresses each individual pupil's needs and then check that the support is helping pupils to make progress, attend more regularly or join in with activities and trips. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making strong progress from their starting points, in line with similar pupils in the school. Pupils and children who speak English as an additional language make substantial progress over their time in school. Disadvantaged children in the early years also make strong progress from their starting points. However, they do not yet achieve the standards expected for their age by the end of the early years, particularly in writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to strengthen pupils' progress in writing so that this is in line with their progress in reading and mathematics
- increase the proportions of children and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who attain the standards expected for their age by the end of early years and key stage 1, particularly in writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Northampton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Luton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you and your senior leaders, the leaders responsible for pupil premium and SEN and two subject leaders. I also met with four members of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the St Albans Catholic Academies Trust. I met formally with a group of pupils and talked informally to other pupils when visiting classrooms and at lunchtime.

I made short visits to observe learning in all key stages with you and the deputy headteacher. I scrutinised pupils' work in a range of subjects from Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6 alongside you and the deputy headteacher.

I reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including improvement plans, documentation and records relating to safeguarding, assessment information and information about attendance and behaviour.

I also considered 95 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, including 94 free-text comments. I also considered the 124 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and the 32 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.