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Mr Edward Flood  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Flood

### **Short inspection of St Paschal Baylon Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 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. St Paschal Baylon is a school where pupils enjoy learning and achieve well. It is a school that is characterised by inclusivity, harmonious relationships and a strong sense of tolerance and respect for all. Pupils receive high-quality spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are keen to make a positive difference to their school, to the local community and to the wider world. Pupils access a wide range of extra-curricular provision, including sports, crafts and choir. They engage well in their learning, take pride in their school and their behaviour in lessons is excellent. They enjoy coming to the school and value the education that they receive. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education that the school provides and staff morale is high.

You, alongside your senior leadership team and governors, have high expectations of every pupil in the school. Since your appointment in September 2017, you have wasted no time in assessing the quality of education that the school provides. You have undertaken a full, honest and accurate appraisal of the school's areas of strength and those requiring further development. Your school improvement plan clearly reflects the key priorities that are most needed to improve the school further. It is detailed, fit for purpose and is based on secure evidence and robust monitoring. The plan contains appropriate, quantifiable measures of impact on which you can gauge your success.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have improved the quality of teaching and learning. You and your leadership team regularly monitor the effectiveness of teaching strategies on pupils' learning and progress. You ensure that staff have access to an effective ongoing training programme so that they are highly skilled practitioners. Most recently, you have ensured that teachers share good practice by visiting each other's classrooms to see the content and depth of the new national curriculum in action. You also ensure that teachers work alongside middle leaders in teams so that their knowledge of the curriculum and assessment continues to grow. This initiative builds leadership capacity in staff at all levels.

Governors have also increased their own capacity by undertaking a range of courses to develop their skills in holding leaders to account. Governors have reorganised their meetings so that there is a sharp focus on the progress of different groups. A core group of governors meets regularly with you to analyse pupils' performance and to challenge you to improve outcomes further. Consequently, most pupils make consistently good progress across the school from the early years to key stage 2.

Nonetheless, you and your leadership team are not content with consistently good progress. You know that your pupils can and should achieve even more. For example, when you took up post as headteacher, you recognised that teachers' assessment of pupils' work was not as rigorous as it could be. You have taken immediate steps to address this. You acknowledge, however, that teachers do not use their increasingly robust assessments to ensure that pupils make more rapid progress from their different starting points.

In addition, while leaders have focused effectively on improving pupils' writing skills, teachers need time to embed the new strategies that leaders have put in place to develop pupils' higher-order reading skills. This is because, while pupils make good progress overall in reading and writing, you acknowledge that too few reach the higher standard. They need even more difficult and demanding activities to help them to excel.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that a strong culture of safeguarding pervades. Staff receive high-quality training and they are knowledgeable about safeguarding policies, practices and procedures. Governors fulfil their safeguarding duties effectively. Pupils feel safe in school and parents believe that their children are safe and well looked after. Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and that they receive excellent support to enable them to stay safe online. They also value the strong pastoral support that they receive. Work with vulnerable parents and other agencies is effective. Your work to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also excellent.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, we agreed some key areas to investigate. The first of these areas was the progress made by girls in reading and mathematics by the

end of key stage 2. While overall progress in mathematics is extremely strong, in 2017 the progress made by a small number of girls declined. In reading, this picture was replicated. There is clear evidence from lesson observations, work scrutiny and meetings with middle and senior leaders that this is not a trend. The progress that girls are making currently across the school in both reading and mathematics is good.

- You and your leadership team, however, are not satisfied with overall standards in reading. You have introduced significant changes to ensure that pupils' higher-order reading skills are developed so that more pupils excel and reach the higher standard. For example, there is a strong focus on increasing the sophistication of pupils' vocabulary, finely tuning pupils' inference skills and sharpening the questions that teachers ask them about key texts. You acknowledge that this remains a key area for further development.
- The second area for investigation concerned the progress that children make in the early years. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was slightly below the national average. Since your appointment, you have reviewed and strengthened assessment systems across the early years. Consequently, there is secure evidence that children make consistently good progress towards the early learning goals. Furthermore, early years leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the provision. The planning of the curriculum is effective and it inspires children to learn. The early years provision is extremely strong.
- The third area of focus was about how effectively leaders are securing improvements to writing in key stage 1. You continue to ensure that writing is a high priority across the school. Pupils' engagement in writing is clear. They take pride in their handwriting and produce good-quality work. Teachers exploit topics that are designed to engage pupils in writing. For example, 'hot boards' are used to deepen pupils' learning to support their writing. Pupils discuss texts and make predictions about what might happen. They respond to key questions about the topic and develop a secure understanding of grammatical concepts. Consequently, pupils make good progress overall. Nevertheless, you recognise that there is still some way to go to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils achieve greater depth in writing.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and other adults embed the strategies that leaders have put in place to improve further the progress that pupils make in reading
- a greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher standard in reading and writing
- teachers use their rigorous assessments of where pupils are in their learning to design activities that promote more rapid progress.

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

Jonathan Smart  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your leadership team and a selection of middle leaders and teachers from across the school. I met parents and three members of the governing body. I spoke formally with a group of pupils and informally with others around the school and in lessons. Furthermore, I observed teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2 and visited the early years. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance information, pupils' assessment information, a range of policies, your evaluation of how well the school is performing and your school improvement plan. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection I considered 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and a number of free-text comments. I also took into account 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 11 responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire.