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Mrs Sarah Smith
Acting Executive Headteacher
Christ The King Catholic Academy
Rodwell Walk
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Blackpool
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Christ The King Catholic Academy

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 2017, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection due to your exceptional leadership. You have high aspirations for your pupils and work rigorously and relentlessly to make sure you achieve the high standards you set for yourself and others. The work and knowledge of the directors of the school is also exceptional. Directors challenge and support you and other leaders in equal measure. At the heart of all your work is your drive and determination to ensure that pupils have better life chances. Central to improving the lives of pupils is the care and support you provide to children and their families. It is evident that all school leaders and staff share this ambition. Staff enjoy working in the school and staff morale is high. They feel well supported and value the coaching and mentoring provided by you and senior leaders.

Pupils feel happy and safe and say that they love coming to school. This is reflected in the positive attitudes they have towards their learning. Pupils think that some pupils occasionally misbehave but that it is always dealt with by teachers. They say their teachers are 'amazing' and that they are always there to help if there is a problem. Pupils spoke very enthusiastically about recent trips they have been on, for example trips to the Harry Potter exhibition in London and to Wild Boar Park. Pupils are well prepared for their transition to high school.

The responses on Parent View show that the vast majority of parents are extremely positive about the school and are delighted they have chosen Christ the King for

their children. All parents who responded agreed that their children are happy, well looked after and making good progress. Parents to whom I spoke shared the same positive view. Parents appreciate that you and all staff 'go the extra mile'. An example of this is the action you take to directly support families to get their children to school. You have worked extremely hard to make sure that all pupils attend school regularly. Attendance for all pupils is now excellent. On the day of the inspection, a number of parents raised concerns about children having to walk around the school building to enter school. We discussed this concern and you rightly explained that all pupils using the main entrance was a greater health and safety risk than pupils using other entrances and that the health and safety of everyone is the priority.

Within your school's raising achievement plan, you identify writing as a priority for improvement. You correctly evaluate that you are making progress in implementing the new scheme for writing but that the pace of improvement is 'steady', rather than the more rapid pace anticipated.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and all school leaders have ensured that the safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and directors are well trained in all areas of safeguarding. They ensure that pupils' safety and well-being is at the heart of all their work. Supporting children and families in challenging circumstances is a priority. The school's family support manager is systematic and highly effective in identifying children and families that require support. Action plans are then put in place for all vulnerable pupils to prevent, and minimise, any further risk. Internet safety is taught to all pupils from Nursery to Year 6. Leaders take action to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. This includes working directly with parents when concerns around internet safety have been identified.

Inspection findings

- The learning environment in the early years provision is exciting, attractive and well organised. All the areas of learning and carefully chosen themes, such as 'Superheroes' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk', equally engage the interest of boys and girls. During the inspection, no gender bias was seen between the activities chosen by boys and girls. Displays included writing produced by boys and girls and there was no real difference between the quality of work. Both were equally good. School data for the current academic year shows that the progress of boys and the progress of girls are broadly in line with each other.
- Current school data indicates that number of pupils reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception will increase again this year. This has been the year-on-year trend for the past three years. The majority of pupils join Reception with skills below typical for their age. All pupils make rapid progress from their starting points due to the strong focus on the development of language and communication skills.
- The early years leader works closely with the key stage 1 leader. This has ensured that pupils are well prepared for the demands of the age-related

expectations for Year 1, and that there is no 'dip' in pupil progress at this time of transition. Pupils are well supported as the continuous provision approach in early years is successfully continued into Year 1.

- Pupil premium funding is used highly effectively to ensure that there is no difference in attainment and progress between disadvantaged and other pupils. For example, in early years and key stage 1, leaders allocate funding to employ a bilingual teaching assistant to support pupils with English as an additional language. A speech and language therapist and therapy assistant are also employed to work specifically with pupils with speech and language delay. They have all been highly effective in supporting pupils to make rapid progress.
- In-school data for the current year shows that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are making progress in line with others in each phase or key stage.
- Leaders have created their own highly detailed pupil progress tracking system, referred to as 'DAFITAL,' Data and Feedback Informed Teaching and Learning. The principle of this approach is simply 'to find out exactly what pupils do not know and teach it to them'. 'DAFITAL' has successfully enabled teachers to very quickly identify pupils at risk of falling behind. Teachers find what they describe as 'grain-sized' gaps in pupils' knowledge and amend their lessons accordingly. Teachers said that this approach has enhanced their teaching and pupils' learning. This is reflected in the current school progress data.
- According to the school's pupil progress tracking information for the current school year, there is no difference between the progress of girls and boys. Both groups are on track to meet the expected standards in reading, writing and maths at the end of key stage 1.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is well led by the assistant headteacher. In key stage 1, pupils are taught in small ability groups by teachers and teaching assistants who are highly trained in the school's chosen approach to the teaching of reading. These groups include those pupils from Reception and Year 3 who require further challenge or support. As a result of this precision teaching, pupils of all abilities have a good knowledge of phonics and can use phonic skills to read and spell words. Almost all pupils are on track to reach the expected standards in phonics by the end of Year 2. The vast majority will reach the expected standards by the end of Year 1.
- The practice of talking before writing is embedded throughout school and has resulted in pupils making rapid progress from their starting points in key stage 1. Pupils' workbooks in literacy and religious education clearly demonstrate that pupils are rapidly developing their writing skills. Current key stage 1 data shows that a small number of pupils than previously are on track to achieve at greater depth.
- Leaders know that the school has a highly successful model of teaching of mathematics, and that it is resulting in pupils working and achieving at greater depth. Consequently, leaders are implementing a similar strategy in writing to ensure that pupils are further challenged, make more rapid progress and work at the same high level. This is already beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' writing skills in key stage 2. Further time is needed to achieve the desired outcomes in key stage 1.

- Teacher assessment of writing in 2016 was completed with maximum rigour, described by leaders as 'airtight'. This could explain why some pupils were achieving at greater depth in reading and mathematics but not in writing.
- School leaders have taken decisive action to improve standards of writing in key stage 2, by ensuring that teachers have an improved understanding about what pupils must be able to do by the end of the key stage. These actions have included providing teachers with access to online tools to moderate pupils' written work. This has enabled them to make accurate comparative judgements. Leaders have provided a higher teacher-to-pupil ratio in Year 6. As a result, an increased number of pupils are expected to achieve at greater depth in writing. In-school data for the current year indicates that more pupils than last year will achieve at greater depth in writing at the end of Year 6.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an increased proportion of children are working at greater depth in writing at key stage 1

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive board, the director of education for the diocese of Lancaster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Loftus
Ofsted Inspector

I met with you to talk about the improvements which had been made since the school became an academy. I looked at the following documents: safeguarding records; your school evaluation and raising achievement plan; attendance data; and pupil progress data. I held discussions with: seven directors, including the chief executive officer and the chair of directors; the early years and key stage leaders; the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator; and four staff members. Together, with phase or key stage leaders, we completed a learning walk of all classes. With two subject leaders, I looked at a small sample of pupils' books from key stages 1 and 2. I heard four pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 read. I also had a discussion with 10 pupils from Years 2 to 6. I spoke with six parents and considered the results of pupil, staff and parent surveys.