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Mr James Field  
Headteacher  
St Robert Southwell Catholic Primary School  
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West Sussex  
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Dear Mr Field

### **Short inspection of St Robert Southwell Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You are determined to provide the best for the pupils in your care. You have communicated a clear vision that balances high academic standards with high-quality pastoral care for pupils and their families. This care for the whole child permeates the school and is shared by all adults who are part of it. It is telling that many parents described the school as a 'family'. As headteacher of a faith school, your gospel values drive your work, and you ensure that these are used to create an inclusive community that celebrates and learns from diversity.

Pupils are very happy at St Robert Southwell. They are confident and proud of the progress they are making. They told me that they like their teachers and their school because 'it is fun'. They enjoy their lessons and say that the food is 'always yummy'. They particularly enjoy the rewards associated with the new behaviour system because they have helped to decide what these should be. They told me that there is always an adult to talk to if they are worried about someone or something. They are clear about the difference between 'mean behaviour' and bullying and say that bullying is very rare, but, if it does happen, teachers are very good at sorting it out.

Parents feel similarly positive about the school. The overwhelming majority of those completing the online survey and those I spoke to in person would recommend it. One parent commented that, 'My daughter runs to school in the morning and is sad to leave in the afternoon – it's her home from home.' Alongside many positive comments about the high level of care displayed by all staff at the school, parents identified improved communications and your availability as positive features of the school. A very small minority questioned the school's response to bullying but I found strong processes in place to teach pupils about positive behaviours and to deal with any bullying incidents.

The strengths of the school identified in the previous inspection report have been maintained and built upon. For example, teachers routinely provide more challenging work for pupils to help them to make more rapid progress. You, rightly, are developing this further, so that more pupils achieve the highest standards of attainment. Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Tracking of pupils' progress in core subjects is rigorous and carefully moderated to ensure that it is accurate. You are aware that your current highly personalised approach to tracking pupils' progress across the wider curriculum does not easily support your analysis of how different groups are achieving. You are aware of the need to refine this work, especially as the school grows in size.

Governors are highly active and share your ambition for the school. They understand their roles well. They are forward thinking and have supported you well in distributing leadership through the school and developing your whole team. They have all attended training and have more planned in order to fully develop their skills to hold you and other leaders to account. The impact of their work can be seen in the way that they now challenge leaders to explain the rationale for projects and want to know how they will benefit the pupils. The quality of evaluations has rapidly improved over the past year. Governors are determined to refine this work further so that they are able to more closely hold leaders to account, including for the use of additional funding.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, including those relating to recruitment, are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Site security is good and visitors are properly vetted. All adults are highly aware of the need to 'think the unthinkable' in order to make sure that pupils are kept safe. They have a secure understanding of what to look out for and the actions to take. You have worked very closely with external agencies when appropriate. This work has supported children and their families.

Pupils feel safe at school and are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. For example, a group of upper key stage 2 pupils told me all about the rules for online communication and why they are needed. They understand the dangers of online grooming and risks associated with social networking and steps to

take if they are ever worried. Several parents also spoke to me about the e-safety training the school has given them. One parent described it as 'invaluable'.

## **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I looked at how well leaders have improved outcomes for pupils, especially those concerning boys' writing. Leaders identified the need to accelerate boys' progress, especially in writing, at the beginning of last academic year. Many actions were put in place during this time, and they have already started to make a difference for current pupils. For example, leaders made sure that teachers had a raised awareness of this group of pupils and what they could achieve. They made sure that texts were chosen to match the interests of the whole class. One particularly successful approach was to challenge pupils to improve their 'writing stamina' and, therefore, extend both the quality and quantity of their work. The work of teaching assistants has also helped pupils to make good progress. Overall, pupils' progress has risen across the school for all groups and boys' attainment in English is improving. However, leaders are aware that more pupils need to achieve the highest standards of attainment across the curriculum and greater depth in their writing.
- I also looked at how well leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced and prepares pupils for their next steps in modern British society. I found that pupils are prepared well for their next steps. My lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work showed that pupils have a rich and varied curriculum. Often, topics are planned to 'bounce off' each other so that learning is continued from subject to subject. For example, I observed pupils develop their history, art and English skills when they explored life in medieval Britain with the visiting 'knight', 'Sir John'. This integration of subjects supports pupils to widen their thinking and to routinely apply the skills they have learned. Leaders have also ensured that topics are planned to inspire pupils. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed the opportunity to apply their design and technology skills in order to make an electronic gadget to impress an entrepreneurial 'investor'. Pupils confidently made and tested electrical circuits. They enthusiastically explained to me the safety rules and how they had worked out that a switch was not functioning correctly.
- Historically, pupils' behaviour has always been very strong at the school, and so I was interested to see what difference the new behaviour policy has made. Leaders and teachers are ambitious for their pupils and want them to develop a love of learning. They designed the new behaviour system, 'good to be green', to shift the focus from good behaviour to 'great learning behaviour'. Each class was involved in planning their class rewards linked to 'staying green'. Pupils are highly motivated by the simple and visible system. They told me that the system is fair and that if pupils make a mistake with their behaviour they are supported to put it right quickly. Pupils are proud of their school and their good behaviour in and out of lessons. They told me that the behaviour I saw in lessons and around the school was typical. The school's records show that there have been very few incidents of poor behaviour and I only observed good or better behaviour during my visit.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to challenge pupils to achieve the highest standards of attainment, especially in writing
- the systems for monitoring pupils' progress across the curriculum allow for the routine evaluation of groups as well as individuals
- governors continue to develop their skills so that they hold leaders more closely to account.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy English  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, other members of school staff and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with your local authority adviser. Together, you and I planned the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We jointly visited all classes in the school to observe pupils' learning, speak with pupils and look in their books. I also spoke with pupils at lunch and during the day and took account of 32 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 67 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 43 written contributions by parents. I spoke with staff and took account of 15 responses to the online staff questionnaire. I looked at a range of documentation including information about the work of governors, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. I also scrutinised and discussed the school's tracking of pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.