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Mrs Sarah Weldon
Our Lady of Good Counsel Primary School
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Dear Mrs Weldon

Short inspection of Our Lady of Good Counsel Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 March 2016, 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are an excellent role model for your staff, ensuring that all of them focus on continuous improvement in all they do and that they visibly uphold the school's caring values. These values help all groups of pupils to achieve their potential and become caring, thoughtful and respectful young people as they grow. Pupils are taught about other cultures and faiths, as well as Catholicism, and to welcome and be kind to others who are different from themselves. Staff ensure that pupils are well looked after, as well as receiving the good teaching that pupils deserve. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall, and pupils are particularly well behaved around the school. They are very polite to visitors and feel proud to be part of their school community.

Staff are a strong team, and feel very positive about their different roles. Governors have recently conducted a survey of staff attitudes. The results were extremely positive, with staff saying how they feel valued by you and senior leaders, and that 'there is a whole-school approach' to how things are done. They feel that their voice matters, and that they make a good contribution to, for example, the school development plan.

Parents who responded to the school's recent survey also expressed strong support for how you and senior leaders lead and manage the school. Almost all of them would recommend it to other parents. One explained that the school 'provides excellent educational and extra-curricular opportunities, enabling all children to develop further in their natural strengths and gain confidence in those areas that are a little more challenging.'

Governors are highly effective. They hold you and the staff to account and examine information on pupils' outcomes to ensure that all groups of pupils are making the progress they need to. They check that gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school, and those nationally, are closing over time by ensuring that the pupil premium funding is spent correctly. Where spending is proving less effective, they ensure that you make adjustments so that disadvantaged pupils make as much progress as possible.

You and the governors have an accurate understanding of the school, and rightly judge that it is good. You have written a detailed action plan that sets out the areas you need to improve. There is also a separate document that shows how you and the governors check that action takes place when you plan it to, and how you can be sure that it has produced the impact that you need. Your middle leaders are helping to monitor the standards in their subjects, and informing you and governors about what needs to happen next.

Teaching is good in the school. Teachers assess pupils accurately and, supported well by teaching assistants, make learning interesting for pupils. Classrooms are orderly places where pupils listen to staff and respond to instructions quickly. Teachers show pupils what they need to do to improve and give support to those who need to catch up. The most-able pupils are given particularly challenging work and are expected to write to a high standard in a range of ways. For example, one Year 6 pupil had described a scene in the First World War, writing, 'I saw how apprehensive he was about entering the snowy battlefield of No Man's Land. The British Army rose from the depths of the Western Front.'

As a result of good teaching, pupils make good progress in all key stages. About four in 10 children enter the school with skills below those found typically in pupils of the same age. Nevertheless, the proportion achieving a good level of development by the time they leave the early years is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils continue to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well, and leave Year 6 well prepared for secondary school. During my visit I examined a large number of pupils' exercise books. These confirm that pupils are making effective progress across almost all year groups. In a small minority of classes, however, pupils' progress is not as quick as it is in others. This is because the work pupils receive is not as well matched to their needs. In addition, not all teachers in the school insist that all pupils complete their work neatly enough. Although the work I saw showed

that most pupils write and calculate with care and pride, a small minority rush their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are well trained and know the warning signs which might indicate that a child is being harmed or abused. A clear and helpful safeguarding policy is in place. Staff are fully aware of their role in reporting any concern they have, and know clearly the school's system for doing this. Staff are very vigilant and understand that, above all else, pupils must be kept safe. Governors also take care to ensure that new staff are recruited safely and that all necessary checks are completed.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are of high quality. During my visit I also examined a selection of case files of pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. These show clearly that you support families wherever possible, but do not hesitate to make referrals to social care and other professionals where this is needed.

A very small minority of parents and staff expressed concerns that any bullying from pupils is not always dealt with promptly. However, pupils I spoke to during my visit were insistent that bullying is extremely rare, and staff deal with it instantly. They said that they and other pupils of all ages feel very safe in school, and that staff teach them about how to keep safe from a wide range of risks, including the internet.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and have an effective plan to address those areas that they need to improve further. Leaders set high expectations which, in turn, staff convey to pupils. The school is a harmonious learning community where everyone behaves respectfully and pupils want to come to school to learn. Attendance is above the national average. Very few pupils are persistently absent.
- Governors are highly effective and are confident in their role. They ask searching questions of leaders and ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress. They ensure that the school is a safe place to be and that pupils are protected. The school's system of teacher appraisal is rigorous. Anonymised examples I saw during my visit show that leaders set clear targets to improve their performance. Governors are clear that, if needed, they will take the decision not to award salary increases unless these targets are met.
- You ensure that any additional funding is spent well. The pupil premium is used effectively and is narrowing the gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The physical education and sports funding has resulted in a high proportion of pupils taking part in at least one extra-curricular sports club,

and many of them enter competitions with other schools. Pupils say they like physical activity greatly, and love the 'Fun Fit Friday' sessions. One pupil has begun to run a 'marvellous morning mile' around the school grounds each day. This is inspiring growing numbers of pupils and adults to join in.

- Teachers assess pupils' progress accurately. They have adapted the system they used previously and feel confident in knowing which pupils are achieving the standards expected for their age, which pupils are beyond this and which pupils need support so they can catch up. Teachers have checked that their assessments are precise by moderating them with other schools.
- Teaching in almost all classes is of a high quality. Teachers are skilled in asking good questions that make pupils think, and ensure that pupils have a good idea of what they need to do next to improve. A small minority of teachers are less confident and are not yet skilled in planning work that matches consistently well to pupils' needs.
- While a large majority of pupils complete their work with pride, a few do not. Not all teachers make sure that pupils write with a neat, joined style once they have learned to do so, and use a ruler when it is required.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. This includes disadvantaged pupils, who are catching up well with other pupils. A high proportion of pupils in the school have the skills expected for their age, and a considerable number have more than this. In a small minority of classes, progress is less strong because pupils are not consistently given work that is suitably challenging for their needs.
- Pupils told me that they are taught well and are cared for by all staff. They say that they are proud to be part of their school and they are expected to work hard and do their best. They feel very safe in school and believe that all adults take note of what they say and value their opinions. This, in turn, makes them respect their teachers.
- Parents confirm that the school is good. Almost all of those who expressed opinions in the recent questionnaire you sent to them gave very positive views of all aspects, including its leadership and the staff. One parent summed up the impact of the work done by staff by telling how, 'My eldest child is now at secondary, and is on track to achieve good GCSEs because of the good grounding he received at this school. Brilliant choice of after-school clubs. Definitely a good school!'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers who are less confident are supported effectively so that different groups of pupils can receive work that closely matches their needs
- all teachers consistently apply the school's expectations of presentation so that pupils' work is neatly completed.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and the early years. We visited all classes to observe teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work across the school. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and as they moved around the school, and met with a group of them at breaktime. At the time of the inspection, there were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for statistics to be analysed. However, I considered the views of 55 parents who had replied to the school's recent questionnaire. I read a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, your school development plan and information on outcomes for pupils currently in the school. I visited the breakfast club, which is maintained by the governing body, to check that pupils were safe. I studied information related to attendance and anonymised examples of teachers' appraisal, and I examined safeguarding records and policies.