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Mr Anthony Harrison  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Harrison

### **Short inspection of The Priory Catholic Voluntary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 13 November 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 October 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The attitudes to learning demonstrated by the pupils at The Priory Catholic Academy continue to be a real strength of the school. Pupils are well mannered and courteous to one another and adults. They are clear about the school's values, summarised as 'WE CARE', and told me that they help them to understand 'how we are learning and developing'.

Vibrant displays around the school show many examples of the high standards achieved by the older pupils. These include work about the significance of Remembrance Day and the life of St Francis of Assisi. The school has developed strong links with international charities that help to give pupils knowledge of, and empathy for, those in more challenging circumstances around the globe. The school has also achieved the Eco Schools Award in recognition of its work in the local community. Senior leaders place much importance on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding to ensure that they leave the school as well-rounded individuals.

At your last inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of information received by parents and carers. The school's website is now a rich source of photographs and news clips that show pupils' work. Newsletters provide information to parents about the life of

the school and share important dates for their diaries. In addition, regular and well-attended parents' information evenings give parents the chance to be part of the school and their children's learning. In the parent survey, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school. All those who responded would recommend the school to others and almost all say that they receive valuable information about the school. One parent commented, 'As a parent I feel very welcome at this school and feel encouraged to be part of all aspects of school life.'

You were also asked to raise standards at key stage 1. This is an area still in need of improvement. Instability in staffing in this key stage has meant that you have not been able to implement improvements effectively and pupils have not reached the standards of which they are capable. Staffing in this key stage is now stable and there are early signs of improvement. However, the quality of teaching is not as strong as in key stage 2.

Over the past three years, the standards achieved by the children at the end of the early years foundation stage have been declining in reading, writing and mathematics. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development has also fallen. You have made some changes to the staffing in early years and have ensured that there is support in place for the leadership of early years. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these changes.

Attainment at key stage 2 remains above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Strengths in teaching in key stage 2 include the effective use of assessment information to plan challenging lessons and good opportunities for pupils to apply their reasoning skills in mathematics. In writing lessons, the careful analysis of model texts helps pupils to appreciate what they should include to ensure that their written work is of a high quality.

In 2018, governors decided that the school would join a larger multi-academy trust, Saint Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust. Since July 2018, members of the new trust have visited the school many times to understand the work of The Priory Catholic Academy and to help leaders identify its next steps. This external evaluation of the school's work is proving to be beneficial. Since September, formal monitoring visits completed by the directors of performance from the trust have correctly prioritised areas for improvement. Regular visits are helping to develop the leadership of the school. As a result, the capacity to make the necessary improvements has increased and you are now tackling the priorities for improvement with greater urgency.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All the necessary checks are completed for the staff at the school. Annual training for all members of staff ensures that they are up to date with the signs and indicators of abuse. The safeguarding training is supplemented with an online assessment tool which ensures that staff have a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the pupils' safety. The school benefits from a family liaison worker who works closely with families and external agencies to help ensure that the children remain safe.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have taken decisive steps to improve teaching in key stage 1. However, the time taken to achieve this has meant that pupils have not attained as well as they should or made the progress of which they are capable.
- Despite some improvements, the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1 remains variable. In the more effective examples of teaching, activities are well matched to pupils' needs and clear success criteria help pupils to understand what is required. However, this is not consistent across the phase. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged by their work.
- This year, you have taken the decision to appoint a leader to oversee the teaching of phonics. The leader supports other adults in the school to develop teaching and learning approaches and to ensure that assessment is accurate. This has resulted in more precise grouping and better focused teaching. However, the quality of the teaching of phonics is not consistent. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to say, segment and blend sounds as part of their daily lessons.
- A newly implemented assessment system now enables staff to identify pupils who have fallen behind and put the right support in place to enable them to catch up. There are early signs that this new system is proving effective in identifying and supporting pupils before they fall too far behind. You have also introduced a new 'blueprint' for teaching, to ensure that all staff are clear about your expectations.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- high-quality teaching ensures that pupils in key stage 1 reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are at least in line with the national averages
- teaching in early years is more closely matched to children's needs, so that greater proportions attain a good level of development
- the teaching of phonics is consistently effective in key stage 1, so that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check is at least in line with national percentages.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lakatos  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, members of your senior leadership team, governors, trust representatives, parents, pupils and teaching assistants. I sampled several lessons with you and the teacher who has responsibility for phonics. I looked at the work in pupils' books from a range of abilities across the school. I met with the school council to talk about its members' learning and experiences of school life. I took account of 54 responses from parents who completed the online survey and looked closely at your school's website. I looked at a range of information, including your school improvement plan, your self-evaluation, school assessment information, monitoring and review reports, and the school's single central record.