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Mrs Karen McVea  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy  
Coventry Road  
Market Harborough  
Leicestershire  
LE16 9BZ

Dear Mrs McVea

### **Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 1 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 March 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The organisation is quite different from the time of that inspection because the school converted to become an academy in April 2012. At the same time, it became a member of the Corpus Christi Academy Trust and is closely linked to the other four primary schools in the trust. You and your leadership team work with the other schools in the trust to monitor and improve pupils' academic achievements. The impact of this can be seen in pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, which has improved in reading, writing and mathematics over the last three years.

The school is popular with parents and you have ensured that the facilities have been improved to meet the growing demand for places. Artefacts from different religions share wall space with warm vibrant displays which captivate, motivate and welcome everyone who enters the school. At every turn, there are celebrations of pupils' work, their achievements and the school's religious character. These underpin the strong social, moral and academic values that are evident when talking to pupils of all ages. As one Year 6 pupil put it, 'We make people feel like they belong.' While another, when talking excitedly about the school band, said, 'No matter what you play, you fit in somewhere.'

School leaders and governors focus on providing the best possible education for pupils and are ambitious for the school's future.

They have a detailed knowledge of pupils' attainment and have rightly identified that the progress of the most-able pupils, in particular, could be improved further by the end of Key Stage 2. Teachers are not accurate enough in identifying the next steps in learning and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their English and mathematics skills to other subjects. As a result, pupils' understanding is not as thorough as it should be.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors place a high priority on keeping children safe. The school's strong Christian values are made ever-present throughout the building. They are lived out through the attitudes and behaviours of staff and pupils towards each other. Year 6 pupils talk confidently about how they feel safe and can rely on adults to address any problems they might have. They trust their classmates to take responsibility for each other's behaviour and welfare. As a result, parents and pupils are certain that bullying and name-calling are very rare. This view is supported by the comprehensive records you keep on behaviour. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay safe online, and the school's website has a wide range of links to support parents on this matter.

Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff and governors undertake regular training to ensure that their knowledge and practice is current. This is supported by clear and effective policies. Many of the high-quality displays around the school successfully link the school's values with references to the fundamental British values of respect, tolerance and compassion. The school's curriculum ensures that pupils have a good understanding of other religions and cultures, and this equips pupils well for their life in modern Britain.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further development. There is a comprehensive plan for improvement which includes specific actions for each subject, drawn up by subject leaders. This is a good illustration of your work to delegate roles and responsibilities across the school's leadership team.
- Governors ask challenging questions of you to ensure that the plan is implemented effectively, and to check on its impact. They use the school's performance appraisal system successfully to hold you and your staff to account for the pupils' outcomes. Governors are clear about their roles and the importance of strong governance in driving improvement. They have a very good understanding of the scheme of delegation which outlines the relationship between the trust and the school. This means they are clear about where responsibilities and accountabilities lie for areas such as health and safety.

- The overwhelming majority of parents are very positive about the school. They believe that the level of care and support is of consistently high quality, identifying the school's values as being central to this. They see communication with school staff as being a strength, with one parent telling me of her joy at seeing the quality of her child's artwork during a recent invitation to visit the school. Parents are almost entirely positive about their children's educational achievements and preparation for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders review the progress of each pupil regularly through formal and informal lesson observations, work scrutiny and ongoing assessment. You undertake termly meetings with teachers to review the progress of each pupil. Your comprehensive notes on these meetings show both the depth of knowledge about each pupil and the actions taken to address any underperformance.
- From the review of work in pupils' books, which you and I undertook during the inspection, senior leaders have an accurate understanding of pupils' attainment and progress. Over time, all pupils make at least the progress expected for their age, with many making more than expected progress. However, work sampled from different classes suggests that teachers are not precise enough about the next steps in pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils are sometimes unclear about how to improve their work and recurring errors are not eradicated. Pupils have not fully mastered and embedded their writing and mathematical skills because there are not enough opportunities to use and apply these skills on a regular basis and across a range of subjects.
- Historically, children have entered the early years at levels of development that were broadly typical for their age or slightly below. In 2015, a lower than average proportion left the early years having achieved a good level of development. This represented a decline on the previous year and the school has acted to address this, focusing resources on areas where children's development was weaker and raising expectations of what children can accomplish.
- By the end of Year 1, an increasing number of pupils achieve the standard expected in the national phonics screening check and this exceeds the national average. At the end of Key Stage 1, in 2015, greater than average proportions of pupils reached the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, all pupils made at least the progress expected, with many making more than that expected for children of their age. A smaller proportion of higher-attaining pupils made more than expected progress than was seen nationally. Leaders have acted quickly to address this, using available information to identify and plug gaps in learning. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability are very strong by the end of Key Stage 2.

- Pupils behave well around the school and at different times of the day. They are polite, well mannered, taking great pride in their school and its uniform. Pupils' attendance is well above the national average because pupils enjoy coming to the school.
- During our visit to each class, pupils were keen to share their work and successes, with you in particular, and this highlighted the very strong relationships between staff and pupils.
- By the time they leave the school, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds speak confidently about their work, sharing and respecting the opinions of others. A good example of this was the discussion which took place when I met with a group of Year 6 pupils. Following their topic on 'Gallery rebels', they had a very mature understanding of what they consider to be art, which they expressed with great clarity. They also linked the work of Damien Hirst to their knowledge of science through a discussion on the viscosity of liquid used to preserve a shark.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that pupils' mastery of writing and mathematics is improved by:

- ensuring that teachers identify and communicate to pupils the next steps in their learning with greater precision
- increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their writing and mathematical learning and skills to a range of situations and subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen McMullan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met you, the school's assistant headteacher, three governors, parents and pupils from Year 6. I considered responses of 32 parents from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We visited all classes in the school, spending a short time in each, and looked at a sample of pupils' work together. I looked at a range of documents including an evaluation of the school's performance and plans for further improvement, information on how the pupil premium is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for child protection and for pupils who have special educational needs or disability.