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Mrs Elaine Mannix  
Head of School  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Coombeshead Road  
Highweek  
Newton Abbot  
Devon  
TQ12 1PT

Dear Mrs Mannix

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school with Non Davies, Ofsted Inspector, on 8 and 9 June 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss safeguarding in your school.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record, documents and policies relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings were held with senior leaders, governors, teachers and support staff. A meeting was also held with the chief executive officer of Plymouth Catholic and Anglican Schools Trust (CAST), the multi-academy trust with overall responsibility for the quality of education at the school. A telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority took place on 7 June 2016. A wide range of external and internal documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour and safety was scrutinised. Inspectors also reviewed curriculum and e-safety plans. Inspectors met with 24 pupils from key stage 2 in two groups. They also observed behaviour at the start of the day, and at break- and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke informally to a number of pupils in lessons and around the school to gather their views on behaviour at the school. Visits to classes and scrutiny of pupils' work were conducted to evaluate pupils' attitudes to learning over

time. Inspectors spoke with parents dropping their children at the school in the morning, and scrutinised the 22 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Having evaluated the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school's safeguarding arrangements do not meet requirements.

## **Context**

St Joseph's is smaller than the average primary school. It became an academy in April 2014 as part of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. A head of school manages the day-to-day running of the school. An executive headteacher supports school leaders two days a week. There are currently 165 pupils on roll and numbers are growing. A higher proportion of pupils than average arrives or leaves the school other than at the normal times. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background, with a small proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average. The local governing body was removed of its powers by the trust in February 2015 and replaced by an enhanced monitoring group (EMG). In February 2016, powers to the local governing body were reinstated.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management in ensuring that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe**

Leaders, governors and the trust lack an overarching strategy for monitoring and evaluating the school's safeguarding arrangements. The trust's scheme of delegated responsibility outlining who does what and how they are held to account is not well understood. Staff, leaders and governors are confused over their roles and responsibilities regarding safeguarding. This lack of clarity results in misunderstandings between the trust, governors, leaders and staff. As a result, procedures to safeguard children lack rigour and are not followed by all staff. Instead, a culture of blame and mistrust exists within the school at all levels. Such a culture is paralysing any attempt to improve safeguarding as well as pupils' understanding of online safety and their attendance.

Systems to check and evaluate the impact of safeguarding processes and then use the findings to improve safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and attendance, and the quality of the curriculum are lacking. The findings from external audits and the reviews of serious incidents are not used to inform practices on a day-to-day basis and improve policies and practices quickly enough. A local authority audit, which highlighted a number of concerns about the arrangements for behaviour and safety at the school in early January 2016, was not considered by governors until April, three months later. The response by the head of school to the findings of the audit, and other concerns that have been raised, lacks sufficient urgency. Governors say that they have to ask repeatedly for information and paperwork to follow up on

matters. The experienced executive headteacher, appointed to support school leaders, has appropriate plans in place that have the potential to bring about the changes needed. However, there has not yet been enough time to implement these successfully.

Appropriate training for child protection is in place, with updates for those who may have missed out. This ensures that pupils are not at imminent risk of neglect, or emotional, physical or sexual abuse. When child protection issues do arise, school leaders take appropriate action. In these instances, detailed and thorough records exist, demonstrating a determination to carry out follow-up work with other agencies. However, leaders do not take the initiative to put systems and processes in place to prevent incidents in the future or reduce risks. Not all staff receive adequate training in relation to wider aspects of safeguarding. For example, training for support staff and governors on key aspects of the 'Prevent' duty is yet to take place. Staff have not received up-to-date training on e-safety and the use of new technologies in order to help pupils keep safe online. New staff, volunteers and agency supply staff do not receive formal induction training to ensure that they are well informed about emergency safety and safeguarding procedures. Support staff are therefore unclear about whom to refer concerns to if they arise, and display a poor understanding of the importance of safeguarding children. Leaders do not evaluate the impact of training to inform current safeguarding practice so that it is improved.

Aspects of the school's record-keeping are not fit for purpose. For example, the recording of safeguarding checks on staff is haphazard, chaotic and disorganised. Leaders were unable to find basic documentation, such as checks on the qualifications of staff or the single central record when first requested. The requirements and processes needed for accurate record-keeping are not well understood. Gaps in records of training exist, and as a result, school leaders and governors are unable to state with confidence who has actually attended training.

A new behaviour policy has been introduced and is in its infancy. Teachers are using a new behaviour code to promote 'learning values' in lessons and around the school. However, it is early days and many pupils remain unclear about the 'learning values' and how they link to their behaviour. Teachers' expectations of and aspiration for pupils' behaviour in lessons are not yet high enough. Too many pupils remain disengaged and unmotivated when activities are not sufficiently challenging for them. While staff report a reduction in the number of 'high-risk' incidents, pupils were less confident that poor behaviour would be robustly dealt with by leaders. Parents agree. No analysis has yet taken place to evaluate whether the new approach is improving pupils' behaviour. In the last two months, the number of recorded lunchtime incidents of hitting, pushing and name-calling remains high. No analysis was available to compare the attendance of different groups of pupils against national data. Pupils' overall attendance and persistent absence remain worse than national figures. Leaders focus on pupils whose attendance is near to or just below 90%. However, this approach does not address the needs of those pupils

who have even lower attendance. Strategies to improve attendance have therefore not been effective. Leaders do not look for patterns and analyse trends in pupils' attendance. This hampers their ability to intervene quickly and take swift action to improve attendance.

The scheme of work to develop pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is inconsistently used across the school. Stronger teaching ensures careful consideration of themes and ideas so that pupils develop a good understanding of values in the context of current issues such as the European referendum. However, pupils' understanding of keeping themselves safe online is weak. The curriculum does not make it clear what pupils will be taught to keep themselves safe online when using new technologies.

Risk assessments are completed for trips, visits, curriculum subjects and different areas of the school premises. However, school leaders have not established a common approach to the use of risk assessments so that staff make full use of them to inform and/or alter their actions where required. While staff are aware that risk assessments exist, they do not routinely apply them. For example, sensitive information regarding children's personal details is not always stored securely. There is no risk assessment for visitors to the school and the procedures for signing visitors in to the school are weak. On arrival to the school, inspectors were not greeted by an appropriately qualified member of staff. No safety briefing was supplied. Pupils reported to inspectors that in the past, they have opened the school doors and let an adult into the school if no member of staff was present. This aspect of the school's safeguarding practice needs to be addressed urgently.

A high proportion of parents spoken to and those who responded to Ofsted's online survey Parent View do not have confidence in the school leadership to promote good behaviour and ensure that their children are kept safe. Parents report that a lack of communication and information from the school on key developments hampers their confidence in the leadership of the school.

### **External support**

The trust's chief executive officer and leaders acknowledge these systemic failings and expressed 'no surprises' in the inspection findings. Despite trust leaders removing the local governing body last year, its response has been too slow to secure the rapid improvement in safeguarding practice required. The enhanced monitoring group, the body to replace local governance, has not had enough impact in addressing these shortcomings. Parental confidence is low. The lack of guidance by leaders for an inexperienced teaching team leaves teachers lacking the necessary depth of skill and understanding.

The local authority has robustly challenged trust leaders to improve the ineffective safeguarding arrangements at the school. Concerns raised by parents have been rigorously investigated, followed up and communicated in detail to trust executives

and the regional schools commissioner's office. The Education Funding Agency, the body within the Department for Education responsible for monitoring safeguarding in academies in England, was first made aware of serious behaviour and safety concerns at the school in February 2015. Ongoing safeguarding concerns were again highlighted during an external safeguarding audit in January 2016. These concerns were also passed on to the relevant authorities, including Ofsted. Local authority evaluations provide detailed audits from which governors can hold senior leaders to account and plan for future developments. However, the trust, school leaders and governors have failed to make full use of such audits to improve safeguarding practice.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Trust leaders, governors and school leaders should urgently develop a strong culture of safeguarding by:
  - ensuring that clear roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability are well understood and followed by all staff
  - establishing a cycle of monitoring activities to check rigorously the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, including the monitoring of pupils' attendance, and that actions are being implemented, including those from external audits
  - developing effective communication and information-sharing procedures so that staff are aware of safeguarding concerns and clear about the procedures they need to follow
  - establishing clear lines of communication with parents regarding pupils' behaviour and safety and improvements to the arrangements for safeguarding their children
  - training staff and governors in the requirements of wider safeguarding matters including the 'Prevent' duty and e-safety
  - establishing curriculum plans to teach pupils key concepts, themes and ideas for e-safety that progress each year in depth and content
  - using risk assessments to inform practice and take appropriate actions where necessary
  - ensuring that the system for keeping records of safeguarding, safer recruitment and staff training are complete, organised and kept up to date.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of Plymouth CAST, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**