

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



18 November 2016

Miss Kelly Dunne  
Interim headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Coombeshead Road  
Highweek  
Newton Abbot  
Devon  
TQ12 1PT

Dear Miss Dunne

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

Following my visit with Richard Vaughan, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 12-13 October 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, consultant headteacher, governors, teachers, teaching assistants, groups of pupils and a representative from Plymouth CAST. A telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors talked to parents informally at the start of the school day and considered 79 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspectors visited lessons in all classes, observed pupils during breaks and spoke to them informally during lessons and at other times of the school day to gauge their views on behaviour and safety. They reviewed pupils' work from a number of displays around the school and looked at a sample of writing and mathematics

books from key stage 2. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, relating to behaviour, safety and safeguarding.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

### **Context**

The school received a monitoring inspection in June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act. The purpose of this second monitoring inspection was to evaluate the school's progress in rectifying a range of shortcomings relating to safeguarding.

St Joseph's became an academy in April 2014 as part of Plymouth CAST. The previous head of school left in August 2016. The school is currently led by a full-time interim headteacher. The executive headteacher who supported leadership last year, for two days a week, is continuing this year, as consultant headteacher.

St Joseph's is smaller than the average primary school with 167 pupils on roll. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion who are known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. More pupils join and leave the school during the academic year than is typically found.

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

Senior leaders have led the way and shown sheer determination to tackle each of the weaknesses identified at the previous monitoring inspection. Although governors and the Trust have been supportive, it is the senior leaders who have been the driving force. They worked swiftly to form an initial action plan. This had a strong focus on aspects that needed improving without delay, such as those relating to security and safeguarding training. The initial plan was carefully reviewed and evaluated and a refreshed, equally focused plan is in place this year. The effectiveness of leaders' plans for improvement and the extent to which they have kept their eye on the key priorities have been instrumental in the school's improved arrangements for safeguarding.

Senior leaders knew that it was paramount to change a culture which had become embedded, where responsibilities for safeguarding and behaviour management were viewed as resting with others, rather than being everyone's responsibility. Nothing was held back from staff when sharing the outcomes of the previous monitoring inspection and some open and honest conversations took place. Through carefully judged training sessions and drawing on external help from the local authority, where necessary, senior leaders have brought staff 'on board'

quickly. Communication has improved and staff appreciate the clarity and consistency that senior leaders have established. The culture has turned around and changed to one where everyone realises they each play a role in keeping pupils safe and ensuring pupils' behaviour is managed effectively.

Staff training days and after-school sessions have focused sharply on safeguarding. Staff have received training in the wider aspects of safeguarding, including e-safety and the use of new technologies. Clear records are kept to show who has attended training. Discussions with staff show that they are clear about the key documents and policies with which they need to be familiar. They know the procedures they should follow if they have a concern about a pupil and the steps they should take if, for example, there is an allegation about a member of staff or a senior leader. Referral forms and contact information for designated safeguarding leads, the chair of governors and the local authority designated officer are prominently displayed on a dedicated safeguarding noticeboard in the staffroom.

The curriculum has been amended to make sure pupils are taught about safeguarding. It is clear that pupils have learned a great deal during this term about keeping themselves safe when using computers and mobile phones. They talk knowledgeably about protecting themselves through passwords and the features that make these strong rather than predictable. They know about the potential risks that can arise through communicating with people they do not know. Reminders about e-safety are displayed around the school and on each laptop computer. Pupils spontaneously referred to these prompts when talking about keeping safe. All governors have been trained on the 'Prevent' duty and training for staff is booked to take place early in November.

Senior leaders have drawn astutely on external support, through the local authority. This has been sharply focused on supporting safeguarding, improving behaviour and, latterly, strengthening provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved considerably since the last monitoring inspection. The behaviour policy has been revised, alongside many other policies associated with safeguarding. These policies are up to date and now fit for purpose. They have been read by all staff, as an integral part of the training programme, and all sign to confirm that they have read key documentation, including important government guidance that staff in all schools need to be familiar with. An induction programme has been established so that any new staff have the guidance and information they require to ensure safeguarding procedures are known and followed. Staff who had joined the school since September were clearly aware of the expectations when it comes to safeguarding.

Teachers and teaching assistants were seen applying the agreed behaviour strategies successfully, both to promote good behaviour and to defuse potentially challenging behaviour. Pupils find that behaviour has improved. They spoke positively about the 'zone boards', which they feel have made a real difference. They like the fact that they start on 'green' each day, even if on the previous day

they slipped to amber. Parents also recognise that pupils' behaviour is getting better. They are kept in touch with what is happening to improve behaviour and other aspects of the school's work, which they appreciate.

Analysis carried out during the monitoring inspection showed that overall behaviour incidents have reduced this term, along with the number of fixed-term exclusions. Leaders' efforts have rightly focused on the most essential aspects of safeguarding and the associated training. They have not yet had an opportunity to analyse the impact of the new behaviour policy, and associated external support, to find out whether incidents involving hitting, pushing and name-calling have reduced, for example – all of which were issues identified by the previous inspection team in June 2016. Attendance is showing some improvement this term but needs to be sustained if attendance is to reach average. Again, while senior leaders have rightly been shining the lens on safeguarding weaknesses, no analysis of patterns in poor attendance, or persistent absence, has taken place to determine where attendance of classes, or groups, is weaker so that actions can be appropriately targeted.

Scrutiny of case studies show that well-organised, thorough systems are in place when issues relating to child protection arise. Leaders ensure that records are kept efficiently and in sufficient detail. A new secure online system for compiling and maintaining records has been put in place and staff have received specific training on how to use it. The newly appointed senior administrative officer has tightened up the arrangements for keeping staff records, particularly those that record safeguarding checks. These were described as 'haphazard, chaotic and disorganised' at the last monitoring inspection. All required checks have been carried out and any gaps in information have been filled. The arrangements for recording the required safeguarding checks are efficient and clear. Procedures for recruiting new staff have been tightened up and follow guidance for safer recruitment practice.

While pupils' behaviour in lessons has much improved, the care they show when completing written work is more variable. Some pupils try hard to produce neat work in writing and mathematics, but this is not typically the case. Some pupils' work is sloppily presented, with untidy crossing out and handwriting that is poorly formed and difficult to read. The time is now right for senior leaders to turn their attention to making sure teachers and teaching assistants have consistently high expectations of pupils' standards of work, to improve achievement where it is not yet good enough.

The school's procedures for using risk assessments have improved. Teaching assistants are now involved in drawing these up, and in reviewing them after any trips or visits, so that they are fully involved in the entire process. The arrangements for signing-in and briefing visitors are now appropriate. Pupils know that all staff, governors and, particularly, visitors will wear identity badges with a coloured lanyard, according to their role. They are adamant that they would never let an adult into the building. This has clearly been emphasised to them and is well

understood. Instances occurred during the inspection when pupils were in the reception area and therefore in a position to let in visitors, who came to the main entrance, but did not do so.

Governance has gathered momentum this term. Governors' minutes show a greater awareness of safeguarding. Members of the governing body now receive pertinent information from the senior leaders. This keeps them in touch with the steps that senior leaders have taken to eradicate the weaknesses identified at the last monitoring inspection and informs them of any work in progress. There is more evidence of governors asking questions and beginning to hold leaders to account than was the case last term. This term's meeting of the full governing body rightly focused on specific safeguarding matters. The new chair of governors was keen to make sure every weakness identified at the last monitoring inspection was covered in a systematic way. However, this degree of scrutiny by governors is at an early stage and governors need to strengthen their knowledge of key aspects of the school's work. There is very limited evidence of governors asking relevant questions about the quality of teaching, for example, or pupils' outcomes or how well pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve. There are some differences in the achievement of groups in some year groups and/or subjects. Governors need to be fully conversant with the overall picture on pupils' outcomes so they can provide the appropriate degree of challenge.

### **External support**

The strategy for monitoring and evaluating the school's work on the part of the Trust is too vague. This remains an issue. Lines of accountability between the governing body and the trust are far from clear. Historically, support focused more on the pastoral aspects of leadership rather than professional challenge. This has only recently begun to change with the appointment in September 2016 of the new area advisor. The appointment of the executive headteacher and interim headteacher by the Trust has provided much-needed support for the senior leaders and staff at the school. New structures and procedures that enable the Trust to oversee, challenge or influence the effectiveness of the school have been introduced this term. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these actions. This applies not only to safeguarding but to key aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

The Trust has provided support for governance, through a representative joining governing body meetings and, at times, charring meetings. This support has had some impact on improving the focus of meetings and the way they are conducted. However, this work is still in its early stages and it is too soon to see its impact on the effectiveness of governance.

The local authority has provided a range of targeted support. This has been influential in supporting leaders' work to eradicate weaknesses in safeguarding. The support has contributed to improving safeguarding practice and pupils' behaviour.

The ongoing support to improve provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is at an early stage and has not yet had time to have a clear impact.

**Priorities for further improvement**

- Strengthen the effectiveness of governance so that governors have a secure knowledge of key aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding, teaching, behaviour, attendance and, particularly, how well pupils from different groups achieve.
- Implement a training programme for governors to improve their effectiveness. Consider drawing on the expertise of a national leader of governance and conducting an external review of governance to identify specific training needs.
- Ensure that the newly developed policies, procedures and curriculum plans are fully evaluated, to determine their impact on behaviour, attendance, exclusions, and pupils' knowledge of how to keep themselves safe.
- The time is now right for senior leaders to shift their focus and ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils when it comes to their learning and progress, and the pride that they take in their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson  
**Ofsted Inspector**