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Mrs Jacqueline McCarthy  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Chatsworth Road  
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Bristol  
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Dear Mrs McCarthy

### **Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2017, 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 May 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Recent changes to the leadership team have ensured that the school is moving forward quickly. Indeed, governors describe you as 'dynamic, focused and fair', a leader who 'knows her stuff'. You have the support of your staff, who are eager to rise to the challenge. You and your staff share the same goals and aspirations in order to provide the pupils with the very best all-round education. Teachers have high expectations of each individual pupil and have a very deep understanding of pupils' academic and emotional needs. Pupils receive a rich and varied curriculum which includes lots of opportunities for them to excel. For example, pupils are able to develop their musical skills through learning an instrument and/or attending choir. Pupils behave very well and have a clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong. They are very proud of their school and comment: 'Although small, we build up together and we are a great school.'

Parents who submitted comments either through letter or via the online inspection questionnaire are positive about the quality of education and care their children receive. However, some parents comment that they would welcome better communication between school and home. Nevertheless, many parents are complimentary about the school, a typical comment describing how St Joseph's is 'a lovely school with a playground full of happy smiling pupils'.

At the time of the last inspection the school was asked to ensure that leaders check

more carefully on the quality of learning for all groups of pupils. During my visit it was very clear that leaders and teachers have a detailed knowledge of the progress all groups are making. Activities excite and motivate pupils and allow them to make good progress in their learning across a range of subjects.

The last inspection report highlighted the need for teachers to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics. The new leadership team is working hard to improve mathematics and current information shows that pupils are making strong progress in this subject.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders and governors place the highest priority on the safeguarding of pupils. Robust systems are rigorously implemented and adhered to by staff, irrespective of their role. Safeguarding documents, records, processes and procedures are fit for purpose and successfully implemented. Staff and governors receive high-quality safeguarding training to keep them informed of all types of risk to children, including female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. This training enables staff to quickly spot concerns and take rapid action with confidence.

You work closely with a range of agencies, and draw on their professional expertise, to ensure that your pupils are kept safe. However, you described that you get frustrated when social care is slow to respond to your concerns for the well-being of individual pupils. Nevertheless, you and your team are like a 'dog with a bone', showing a ruthless and unwavering determination to ensure that your pupils are kept safe.

There is a strong culture of safety and security within the school. Parents speak positively about the changes you have made to significantly improve site security and are confident their children are kept safe. Leaders carefully evaluate the risk of any activity, such as the recently installed playground adventure trail.

Pupils are confident they can share any concerns or worries they may have with an adult. They comment that their school is a safe and happy place to be where they are looked after well. Pupils describe that incidents of bullying 'don't happen at our school' and are confident that any disputes are quickly resolved by staff. Pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of keeping safe. They welcome the guidance they are given when using electronic equipment and are fully aware of the potential risks and dangers, for example when using personal tablets and mobile phones.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children start St Joseph's with skills below those expected for their age, especially in their communication, language and literacy skills. This is because many have little prior knowledge of the English language. As a result of effective teaching children make good progress during their time in the early years. The

proportion reaching a good level of development continues to improve and is now above the national average. Children achieve well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are aware that there remains a small gender difference between the progress girls and boys make. You are tackling this quickly, as staff ensure that the activities planned precisely meet the needs of children and excite and motivate them to learn. Consequently, children get a good start to their education. You and your leadership know that pupils continue to make strong progress in Year 1. For example, a higher proportion of pupils than the national average met the expected levels in the Year 1 national phonics check and this has continued to improve year-on-year.

- Through your own careful analysis you and your leadership team are aware that there remain small differences in achievement between girls and boys in mathematics. You recognise that girls need to have greater confidence in using and applying their mathematical knowledge. Teachers are working quickly to tackle this through providing girls with the opportunity to talk about their mathematics, sharing and building on their ideas to solve problems and providing them with increased opportunities to define and explain their thinking.
- Girls spoken to during the inspection commented how they welcome the changes made in the teaching of mathematics and the guidance and support they are given. As a result, girls are quickly catching up with boys and they are making good progress. This is reflected in their work books and current progress information. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent and know that there is further work to be undertaken to ensure that girls make the best possible progress in their mathematics.
- Inspection findings confirm that you and your leadership team have a very clear and detailed understanding of pupils' outcomes, including the achievement and progress of the most able. You use this information to accurately inform school improvements. Teachers plan activities which are more precisely meeting the needs of the most able pupils, especially in mathematics and writing. Pupils are enthused by the activities provided and are highly motivated to achieve well. Current progress information shows these pupils are typically making good progress but more work is required by leaders to ensure that the most able pupils make the very best progress.
- The effective support provided for disadvantaged pupils enables them to make better progress and catch up with other pupils in the school and nationally. Many of these pupils have additional learning and emotional needs and you ensure that these pupils are well supported through a range of different specialist teaching sessions and individual help. For example, you make good use of speech and language therapists to support pupils in their communication skills. This is having a positive impact on the progress they are making in their reading, writing and mathematics.
- You clearly know who your most able disadvantaged pupils are. You use your pupil premium funding wisely to ensure that these pupils achieve well. The school's current progress information confirms this group are continuing to achieve well and are on track to exceed the national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

- You keep your governors well informed and they are very supportive and involved in the life of the school. There is evidence governors are increasingly holding leaders to account for the quality of education pupils receive.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently provide the highest levels of challenge to enable the most able pupils to make stronger progress
- differences continue to diminish quickly between girls and boys in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. We talked about the improvements which have been made since the last inspection. Together we visited mathematics lessons and carried out a learning walk through the rest of the school. I also held discussions with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and talked to pupils. I held a telephone conversation with an officer from the local authority. A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. I also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements and attendance information. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and also took into account the 17 responses to 'Parent View' (Ofsted's online survey) and considered additional comments received from parents.

The key lines of enquiry tested on the short inspection day were:

- What is the quality of the early years provision to ensure that children get a good start to their education?
- What is the school doing to diminish the differences in achievement between girls and boys in mathematics in Year 1 and Year 2?
- How well are the most able pupils achieving?
- What is the school doing to ensure that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, make good progress?
- Does the school keep pupils safe?