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Mrs Mary Young
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Young

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are determined that all pupils will succeed and are relentless in your drive to achieve this. You joined the school in September 2015 and wasted no time in addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and raising standards. You immediately focused your actions on improving the effectiveness of phonics teaching, and on ensuring that pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 were well prepared for the requirements of the new national assessments.

Your impact is evident in the improved outcomes seen in 2016 and the improved progress of pupils currently in school. Standards have risen in the early years. The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics screening check has increased. The current Year 2 and Year 6 are on track to achieve good outcomes from their varying starting points.

You have worked tirelessly to eradicate weaker teaching through effective performance management. Your new staff team value highly the leadership you provide and are inspired by your ambition for the school. Staff respect your dedication and share your enthusiasm to achieve the best outcomes for all pupils.

One of your most significant actions was to establish rigorous assessment procedures and introduce a detailed system for checking the progress of every pupil in the school. You identified precisely those pupils whose progress had stalled to

ensure they received the right intervention to catch up. As a result, pupils are making good progress.

You have greatly improved the quality of provision for children in the early years. Children now have continuous access to outdoor learning and high-quality resources.

Governors recognise your achievements in taking a school that was not as effective as it should be and improving it rapidly. They are committed to the success of the school and to securing ongoing improvements. They welcome your honest reporting that enables them to strengthen their effectiveness in holding you to account. The governing body plays a full and effective role in monitoring the work of the school.

The school is a happy place to learn. Pupils are focused in lessons and have good opportunities to work together and talk about their learning. They feel well supported by their teachers and enjoy being made to think about their learning. They take great comfort from being taught in a small school where staff know and understand them well.

Attendance is high. Pupils value their learning and find the school a caring and welcoming place to be. Leaders successfully encourage high rates of attendance for all pupils.

Parents feel their children are supported and well cared for. They value the improvements you have made.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are very mindful of the responsibilities they have in keeping children safe. They take their responsibilities seriously and have undertaken comprehensive training to ensure their knowledge and practice is up to date. Rigorous appointment and induction procedures ensure that all new staff are fully aware of their responsibilities. Record-keeping is well maintained and fully compliant with statutory requirements.

The curriculum is used well to ensure pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe at school and at home. Pupils were able to discuss the actions they would take to remain safe, for example the actions needed to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- Your leadership has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. You know what constitutes effective teaching and have challenged practice that did not meet your high expectations. You have worked well with the local authority and local schools to help you drive through change.
- All teachers share your high expectations and ambition for the school. They work hard to ensure their lessons are thought-provoking and engage pupils. They welcome advice on how to improve their work further and benefit from high-quality professional development and guidance.

- The detailed assessment procedures identify any pupils who have fallen behind in their learning. Extra support is used well to ensure that any gaps in learning are overcome and pupils' learning needs are met.
- Teachers use effective strategies to develop pupils' early reading skills. The proportion of pupils who met the required standard in the phonics screening check increased significantly in 2016. The school predicts similar outcomes in 2017. The least able pupils are able to use their knowledge of phonics to pronounce unfamiliar words. The most able pupils read with fluency.
- Pupils' good writing skills have been enhanced by the introduction of a consistent handwriting style across the school. Teachers' high-quality written and verbal feedback contributes well to pupils' good progress. However, not enough pupils achieve the higher standards in writing by the end of Year 6. Teaching does not yet ensure that pupils are given enough opportunities to edit or redraft their written work in order to improve it. Work for the most able pupils also sometimes lacks challenge.
- Attainment and progress in mathematics are strengthening across the school. This is because leaders are using assessment information well to inform what teachers focus on. Weaker skills in reasoning and problem solving have been tackled and work in pupils' books shows the improved progress pupils are making in these aspects of mathematics.
- There is a strong and improving picture of achievement in all years and in all subjects. Attainment and progress of pupils at the end of key stage 1 and 2, in 2016, were above the national averages in all subjects.
- The governing body is effective and has been strengthened. It commissioned an independent audit of governance and has implemented all the recommendations. Governors are fully involved in monitoring the work of the school. They use their collective skills well to provide both challenge and support, which is contributing to the school's continuous improvement.
- Governors recognise that the school's website does not, at present, fully meet requirements on the publication of specified information. All statutory documentation is available to view in school and ready to be uploaded when the new website is launched shortly.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and have embraced the training and support given to them. They are clear about the relative strengths and weaknesses in their subject and identify the correct priorities for improvement. For example, the mathematics subject leader rightly identified that pupils need more opportunities to reason about their learning. Middle leaders now need to analyse information from assessing pupils' skills and abilities more sharply when evaluating the impact of their work and to bring about further improvements to teaching and learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils attain higher standards in writing by providing more opportunities for pupils to edit, redraft and improve their work and ensure that the most able pupils are continually challenged

- middle leaders use assessment information more sharply to evaluate the impact of their work and secure further improvements in teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you, middle leaders, several members of the governing body and the school improvement adviser from the local authority. With you, I looked at pupils' work in lessons. I talked to pupils about their learning and listened to them read. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work. I examined your safeguarding documents and your information about assessment, behaviour and attendance. I took account of 12 responses to the pupil questionnaire, six responses to the staff questionnaire and 29 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 25 written responses.