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Mrs Elizabeth Christopher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Malmesbury
Holloway Hill
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Dear Mrs Christopher

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Malmesbury

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your leadership has created a school that is welcoming and safe while providing learning for pupils that stretches and challenges them effectively. As one parent commented, 'The school provides a calm, happy, and very well managed environment for learning.'

You have provided capacity within leadership by creating a team of three middle leaders whose work has helped to provide more rapid progress in pupils' achievements. Their focus on English, mathematics and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has ensured that successful improvements have been made since the last inspection.

Teachers have improved the quality of reading significantly since the last inspection. Progress in reading placed the school in the top 25% in the country in the end of year tests at key stage 2 in 2016. The foundations for this are secured by the precise and efficient teaching of phonics. Pupils in key stage 1 are achieving well above the national average in Year 1 and 2 in the phonics screening check. To make sure that this impact is maintained, you have revamped the library and had it stocked with a range of books that provide a rich and varied resource that is supporting pupils' continual enhancement in comprehension skills. The librarian is a keen reader who is able to find books that provide an enriching vocabulary that pupils use positively within their talking and writing. The space provides an oasis of

calm contemplation for pupils. Here, older pupils read to younger pupils, which encourages further reading and equips the older pupils with strong social skills, thus preparing them for their next steps in life well.

You have devised an innovative reward system that encourages pupils to exhibit strong personal attributes and characteristics. As a consequence, pupils are more resilient in their learning and continue with tasks until a valuable outcome has been secured. Pupils are prepared to take calculated risks which provide them with new and more engaging ways to secure rapid and resourceful steps forward in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a culture where any risks identified by pupils and staff are acted upon immediately and minimised, for example in matters relating to the security of the school site. Your determined actions in addressing safeguarding, safety and security issues reflect your deep commitment to this aspect of the school's work.

The safeguarding policy is up to date and very comprehensive, ensuring that all are clear about the procedures to follow if a concern is raised. Parents are fully informed about the school's processes through the publication of the most recent national guidelines for safeguarding on the website. Staff are suitably trained in the most recent changes to safeguarding procedures, meaning that they can discharge their duties with confidence. Leaders are unyielding yet sensitive in their work with pupils, parents and external agencies to ensure that the support for the most vulnerable pupils is appropriate. Importantly, pupils feel safe and secure in school; most parents agree. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and child protection records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Governors are striving for the school to be the best it can but have not understood the very demanding criteria for a school to be deemed outstanding; this has led to them holding an inaccurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You are aware of this and have planned more effectively with middle leaders so that future actions are focused on the school's priorities to improve learning outcomes.
- An area that was investigated to ascertain that the school remains good was the improvements made in the core subjects of English and mathematics. You have planned a new and more creative curriculum that the pupils find intriguing while learning new concepts, skills and understanding. The new curriculum engages pupils in their learning and fits the stringent demands of the government's new expectations. Within this, pupils are engaged in writing a range of genres that prepare them well for the end-of-year tests at key stages 1 and 2. Pupils need support to build on this further so that they continue to apply their learning to real-life contexts.
- In addition, you have concentrated on how, in 2016, too few of the middle-ability pupils achieved at the higher level in the grammar and spelling tests. You are

making sure that pupils are more secure in the grammatical structures that underpin the different forms of writing so that the older pupils are ready for secondary school education. A range of approaches support your work in this area well. Spelling and grammar activities are matched to the right level for pupils' abilities and ages and, therefore, meet their needs appropriately. Parents are informed of your expectations for pupils so that support can be given at home. This helps pupils to make more rapid progress. You and your middle leaders know that this area can be improved further. The majority of pupils are of middle and high ability and you are raising teachers' expectations of what the most able, including the most able disadvantaged, are capable of achieving.

- You have looked carefully at the quality of leadership of mathematics. Following the Year 6 results in 2016, a full review of pupils' performance and the curriculum for mathematics was undertaken. The findings have been used to identify the key areas for improvement required and are contained in the subject improvement plan, not just for Year 6 but across the school. The new actions are engaging teachers and pupils in mathematics and have created a renewed and distinctive cultural shift in attitude toward the subject in a short space of time. You are aware that the start is going well and are keen to improve on it continually so that problem-solving, reasoning and understanding fractions are no longer barriers to success in the end-of-year tests at key stage 2.
- Another area to look at was the poor attendance of some pupils. Close working with another local school has enabled you to share the time of a parent support worker. This, plus the adoption of a range of initiatives, has improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and this is better, now, than the national average.
- Finally, the special educational needs coordinator has made sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and their parents are more involved in the educational support they receive, which has many beneficial results. Each pupil has a colourful one-page profile that explains how the pupil learns, what he or she likes to do, or finds difficult or emotionally, physically or intellectually challenging so that teachers and parents can be more receptive to the expectations of daily life. Pupils are more confident as a result of their voices being heard and are making better progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's evaluation of its work is accurate so that actions are successfully focused on the main priorities that will improve standards and the quality of education in the school
- teachers help pupils to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills further across the curriculum so that pupils apply their learning in a range of contexts
- the most able and middle-ability pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are provided with challenge to deepen their thinking, write at a greater depth and reason more proficiently 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 Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of governors, staff and pupils. I had a telephone call with the school improvement adviser. I visited lessons for all classes in the school. I looked at the quality of the work in pupils' exercise books. I considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. I took into account 54 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 33 comments written by parents, plus the 15 responses from staff and the 20 pupil responses to the Ofsted online survey.