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Mrs Marie Baxendale  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Mossy Lea Road  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Mrs Baxendale

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

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 December 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained, and built on, the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Groups of parents, pupils and governors spoken to during the inspection recognise the huge improvements you, your leadership team and staff have made to the school since your appointment as headteacher.

You, along with your leadership team and governors, aim to ensure that every pupil is highly valued at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. Leaders are determined to provide the highest quality of education and, through their knowledge of each pupil, recognise when further support is required to help pupils achieve well. The learning environment is purposeful, calm and respectful. There is a welcoming and warm feeling to the school with strong relationships between staff and pupils. Parents say, 'The pastoral side of school is really wonderful' and appreciate the way 'staff go out of their way to help individual children'. They are also delighted with the support offered to pupils transferring from other schools. One parent stated that they 'could find no fault with the school'.

Your leadership team has identified and provided for a range of academic, social and emotional support. You and your staff team have reviewed the curriculum and teachers plan topics which inspire pupils' interests. Parents and pupils value the

range and variety of extra-curricular activities, which includes bikeability training and the opportunity to look after the school's four chickens.

You and your team have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' books show their developing vocabulary use, increased variation in sentence structure and improving grammatical awareness. The focus on these aspects of literacy ensures that pupils are combining the secretarial aspects of writing and their creativity to produce writing of an improving quality. The curriculum has been reviewed and includes opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of customs and cultures of other countries. Pupils' blogging usually results in replies from the wider global community.

The BERT (Boys Enjoy Reading Together) club has been set up following your monitoring and analysis of pupils' attainment to inspire boys' reading and writing and to promote positive attitudes to learning. Boys attending the club state that they enjoy the activities and feel it is beginning to improve their attitudes to reading and writing. They also recognise why leaders introduced it.

Governors and leaders' introduction of the Little Joey's pre-school has been well received by parents. Numbers on roll show that this has met an identified need in the local community. Careful and meticulous planning across the early years is allowing the school to ensure that future pupils joining the school have appropriate pre-school experiences. The early years classrooms are literature rich, with children encouraged to practise their early writing skills at every opportunity.

School assessment, tracking data and discussions with leaders show that progress and attainment is monitored closely with support given where needed. Pupil progress meetings are held each half term. Teaching assistants are well qualified and trained to deliver a variety of interventions to boost pupils' academic and social development and increase their confidence and resilience. As a result, current pupils are on track to improve on last year's end-of-key-stage results.

Strategies introduced to further develop pupils' reading and writing are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning but these need to be embedded and be consistently used. Leaders' monitoring of attainment and progress needs to be 'tweaked' to ensure that individual pupils are challenged appropriately to meet higher standards.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors fulfil statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff.

Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training and, as a result, staff know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are very clear about the school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they have regarding the safeguarding of pupils.

Pupils are taught about how to stay safe online. Leaders have introduced and implemented clear procedures for internet safety. Pupils demonstrated their understanding of these during a Year 4/Year 5 lesson, where they created a cartoon strip to raise awareness of the dangers of posting pictures or personal details on the internet. Pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and report concerns to staff. Filtering is in place and is used effectively.

### **Inspection findings**

- Your self-evaluation accurately judges the school to be good. Governors and the local authority adviser confirm that the school has continued to improve under your committed and determined leadership and now has a vast range of strengths, including pupils' behaviour and welfare. Governors have a good understanding of standards of attainment and progress in the school and challenge leaders' viewpoints by drawing on their first-hand evidence from visits into school. The local authority believes that school leaders have been adept at building professional and beneficial links with other schools and agencies.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is exemplary. Their impeccable conduct in lessons ensures that pupils are on task and engaged, allowing them to produce work of an improving quality. There are an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to develop responsibility and leadership. Pupils elect members of the school council and there are also active contributions from pupils through the eco-council and e-safety ambassadors.
- Standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 in reading and writing were broadly in line with national averages. Mathematics results were above national averages. However, the number of middle-ability pupils attaining the higher levels was below national averages. The few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium made significantly better progress in English and mathematics compared to other pupils nationally.
- Standards at the end of key stage 1 in 2016 in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly in line with national averages at the expected attainment levels. Numbers of pupils attaining the higher levels were below national averages, particularly for boys and middle-ability pupils.

- The teaching of phonics is strong; every pupil in Year 1 last year met the expected standard for the phonics check. Your decision to reorganise the way phonics is taught was a bold step to take, but you have been rewarded with improvements in pupils' confidence and abilities in reading and writing.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the standards and quality of pupils' work. You use a variety of strategies to support pupils to enable them to attain and progress well, including academic and social/emotional support. There are a wide range of interventions provided for pupils by appropriately trained members of staff and volunteers. These are implemented when pupils' progress suggests that they are needed. Rigorous monitoring and leaders' analysis of current pupils' attainment, including more effective monitoring of the progress of the most able, suggest that these improvements will continue.
- Specific reading programmes have been implemented across the school and, through designated time in the school day, are developing pupils' comprehension skills and their understanding of text structure and plot development. Additionally, specific strategies to improve pupils' writing have also been implemented. Pupils discussed the approaches with much enthusiasm and believe that their writing is getting better. Pupils also enjoy blogging to share their ideas for writing and respond well to the comments shared.
- Leaders monitor pupils' absence with tenacity. Attendance is above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have lower attendance rates, mainly due to numerous important medical appointments. Extended family holidays abroad also negatively affect attendance rates, but school leaders are aware of these and monitor them closely.

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

Leaders and governors should ensure that pupils from different starting points make improved progress to attain higher levels in English and mathematics, by:

- continuing to monitor the implementation and delivery of the curriculum to ensure that it promotes the improving progress of all pupils
- monitoring the inclusion of correct grammar, punctuation and spelling in pupils' writing
- further developing the monitoring of pupils' progress to more easily identify those pupils who could make even better progress or attain even higher standards
- continuing to provide opportunities for pupils to use their imagination and creativity in their writing through relevant and inspiring experiences.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, 22 parents, three members of the governing body, a representative from the diocese and a representative from the local authority. I spoke with the school's deputy headteacher in her roles as literacy leader and early years leader. Also, I talked with small groups of pupils formally and informally around the school and in lessons. In addition, I jointly observed teaching and learning in all classes and scrutinised writing books from pupils in all year groups. I examined a range of documentation, including documents relating to attendance, safeguarding and exclusions. I took account of the minutes of the governing body, reports written by local authority advisers, the school's self-evaluation of how well it is doing, the school's improvement priorities and the school's assessment information. I reviewed the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered 40 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text service.