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Mrs Natalie Wood
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Natalie Wood

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

Following my visit to the school on 4 May 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

You provide the school with strong and passionate leadership and have successfully guided your school during a period of change, including the forming of a new leadership team and change of deputy headteacher. You have not let these changes divert you from the main focus on school improvement and as a result you have achieved considerable success.

The previous inspection identified the need to improve pupils' progress in all classes. You have established effective and reliable procedures for assessing pupils' learning and tracking their progress. Targeted professional development has made sure that teaching continues to improve. Effective leadership and teaching have ensured that the school's end-of-key-stage test results are now significantly above the national expected average in all areas reported on.

Your school's strong moral and religious values make an important contribution to the overall development of pupils' personal, spiritual and academic achievement. St Joseph's is at the heart of the local community and links with the church are well established. You have created a calm and purposeful learning environment where pupils are safe and happy. Your pupils are eloquent, respectful and take great pride in their school. They behave extremely well in lessons and throughout the school day. Your pupils are great ambassadors for the school.

Most parents are very positive about the school and would highly recommend it to others. A number of parents particularly appreciate that your school is supportive and inclusive of the large and growing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Parents liked the fact that reading books and school letters were available in dual languages. Comments from parents such as 'St Joseph's is an excellent school that ensures all children reach their potential' are typical of many.

Governors are effective. They could readily share the strengths of the school as well as identify what the school needs to do next in order to improve. Governors are invited to attend 'open days' and value the quality reports they receive from subject leaders. As a consequence of receiving quality information combined with first-hand experience, governors are well placed to offer equal support and challenge to the school. Governors have most recently combined committee meetings to ensure that they are more effective in decisive decision-making.

You critically review aspects of the school that need to improve further and you have taken decisive actions to bring about improvements in specific areas. You have identified that there is more to be done to improve the outcomes of boys at higher standards across the school and in particular in relation to boys' writing in key stage 1 and boys' reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2. You are aware that there are some variations in the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes in books across the school and have plans in place to guide future improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. Governors and staff have recently received safeguarding and radicalisation and extremism duty training. Staff know the pupils well and are therefore quick to identify any concerns. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding in school, with everyone understanding their role in maintaining pupils' safety and well-being.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that the necessary checks are made on staff prior to their appointment. Records of incidents or concerns are logged and stored securely.

Pupils talk with confidence about what they would do if they had a worry or concern. They know the difference between falling-out and bullying and state that bullying rarely happens at St Joseph's. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the internet and could provide many examples of this. Pupils say that they feel safe and they are safe, as a result of the emphasis placed on safety by the school. The school website provides helpful advice for parents on internet safety.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was how well most-able boys are being supported in writing across key stage 1 and key stage 2. This was because of differences between girls' and boys' outcomes in writing from early years to the end of key stage 2 and the low number of boys attaining at greater depth in writing

compared to girls.

- You had already put in a plan of action to promote the development of writing and basic skills for all pupils with an emphasis on boys in particular. Local authority consultants have provided training to support staff on aspects of writing such as grammar and phonics. Consultants have worked with staff to demonstrate how the sharing of good practice within the school will raise aspirations and staff expectations of pupil outcomes at higher levels.
- You and leaders in the school are challenging teachers to ensure that writing is recorded more frequently and consistently across classes. Writing is given a high priority across the school and there are some excellent examples of high-quality work. Spelling and handwriting are recent focused developments and are being monitored by leaders to ensure that writing outcomes for the most able pupils are improved. Boy-friendly writing themes have been considered to ensure the positive engagement of boys in writing.
- Your focus on writing, alongside current school data, indicates that outcomes for most-able boys in writing are improving. Joint lesson observations, book analysis and discussions with pupils confirm this. Some pupils said that they are not always challenged in lessons and you acknowledged that, in some instances, teachers need to increase the challenge and pitch at the highest expectations of pupils' capabilities. In order to sustain more rapid improvement in writing, all pupils need opportunities to write a greater length, both within English and across the curriculum, with consistency of high expectations across all classes.
- My second line of enquiry arose from my analysis of the school's assessment information in relation to pupil outcomes at the end of early years, in particular how transition into Year 1 supports pupils to continue to make good progress. This was because the data at the end of early years was inconsistent and progress in reading at the end of key stage 1 could have been better for some pupils.
- Staffing in the early years has lacked consistency since the last inspection. There have been five teachers in the last three years. This has led to difficulties in the reliability of the assessment of children's progress. Leaders are keen to ensure that stability returns and the recently appointed deputy headteacher now teaches this class. Early years assessments seen clearly track children's progress with a secure evidence base. This will ensure a more accurate baseline of pupil assessment.
- My third line of enquiry related to how well leaders ensured that most-able boys are challenged to attain at greater depth in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. This was because boys do not attain as well as girls against the national expectation at greater depth by the end of Year 6.
- You had identified this as a school development focus and have carefully considered the way the curriculum is organised to ensure that these variations in outcomes are addressed. Leaders have improved and strengthened teaching substantially so that all groups of pupils, particularly most-able boys, learn increasing well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teacher high expectations lead to improved outcomes and attainment for most - able boys at greater depth
- opportunities are provided for pupils to write extended pieces of writing across the curriculum

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

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Rennie
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, senior and subject leaders. Meetings were held with a representative from the local authority and six governors. Discussions were held with a group of 10 pupils. I listened to six readers. I scrutinised pupils' work in their books and a range of documents provided by the school, including safeguarding information, policies and the school's self-evaluation. In addition to this, I assessed the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central register (the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff). I made short visits to see pupils learning in all classes and carried out two joint observations. I took account of 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 43 written comments.