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Mrs Anne Hamilton  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Stockport Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Hamilton

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

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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 strong leadership and have created a culture which gives pupils the confidence to aspire to be the best that they can possibly be. The school's Catholic ethos and motto, 'loving to learn and learning to love', underpins everything and infuses the quality of relationships between adults, pupils and their parents.

You are ambitious for pupils and want them to fly. You leave no stone unturned in your quest to improve aspirations and standards. Your clear vision and high expectations are shared by all staff. You know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Effective teaching throughout the school is leading to good outcomes for pupils. Teachers are proud to work at the school and appreciate the training that they receive to improve their classroom practice. In recognition of your work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, the school was accredited with a local pupil premium award in 2016.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well. They say that they feel safe and are valued by their teachers. As one pupil commented, 'Everyone treats each other with respect.' Pupils are polite and show positive attitudes to their learning.

Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through a wide variety of activities, assemblies, extra-curricular activities and trips. Pupils learn about the main world religions and visit different places of worship.

A very large majority of parents believe that their children are taught well and make good progress. They report that they are well informed about how well their children are doing. One parent commented, 'It is a brilliant school which has a great team working together to make sure each pupil achieves their potential.'

Governors are passionate and committed to the school. As one governor commented, 'The school is a hidden gem.' Governors possess the skills and expertise from a range of professional backgrounds to challenge and support leaders. They have a strong understanding of the strengths of the school and those areas that could be improved further. Governors know how well different groups of pupils achieve, including disadvantaged pupils.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. You have developed an interesting curriculum which gives pupils a purpose for writing. Teachers plan activities to ensure that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed effectively through geography, history and science. You have restructured the roles of senior and middle leaders to establish a strong and united team. You have developed the leadership skills of middle leaders well, so that they are able to carry out their roles more effectively. For example, they are confident to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and offer useful advice to their colleagues.

You recognised that low-ability disadvantaged pupils did not make good enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. You have taken action to rectify this and standards have improved for these pupils. You are determined to improve the standards that low-ability disadvantaged pupils reach in reading by the end of key stage 2. You acknowledge the need to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The work that you have done to improve the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils is having an impact.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. For example, the single central record is kept up to date and all necessary checks are made when appointing new staff. Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff receive regular updates throughout the year. All staff have read the most up-to-date guidance on 'Keeping children safe in education'. Staff have a clear understanding of potential risks and know how to deal with any concerns. Safeguarding referrals are made in a timely manner and concerns followed up appropriately. Pupils say that bullying is rare and are confident that any incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively by staff.

### **Inspection findings**

- You identified that pupils did not make rapid enough progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 last year. You have had a blitz on reading and introduced a

range of effective strategies to improve pupils' progress. Pupils develop a love of reading because they read every day. Older pupils enjoy reading to younger pupils and parents and grandparents volunteer to read with children. You also encourage reading by holding 'readathons', taking pupils to the local library and celebrating world book day. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the books that they have read. They appreciate the additional support and rewards that they receive. Leaders have provided training so that teachers now spend more time developing pupils' comprehension of what they are reading. Current assessment information shows that progress in reading is improving. However, you recognise that low-ability disadvantaged pupils need to reach the standards in reading.

- In 2016, low-ability disadvantaged pupils did not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. You now ensure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively for a range of interventions to help these pupils to catch up. Pupils who read to me were able to use their phonic skills well to interpret new words. They could work out unfamiliar words by blending sounds and letters. Records show that pupils read regularly, including at home. Writing is developing well because pupils are encouraged to use relevant vocabulary in order to make their work interesting. Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that they regularly extend their problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- Attendance was above the national average for all pupils in 2016. However, it was below the national average for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. These groups of pupils also had higher persistent absence than found nationally. You and your leaders work closely with families to improve attendance. You have introduced a range of incentives and rewards to encourage pupils to come to school regularly. The impact of these initiatives is that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased. There has also been a reduction in their persistent absenteeism. However, you recognise that the attendance for disadvantaged pupils needs to improve further.
- My scrutiny of pupils' work and my discussions with pupils in lessons indicate that most of the activities set by teachers are closely matched to the ability of the pupils. However, we agreed that the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged by the tasks that they are given.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains a priority so that it is at least in line with the national average
- the standards that low-ability disadvantaged pupils reach in reading at the end of key stage 2 continues to improve
- the most able pupils have greater challenge so that they can reach the highest standards of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection I met with you, other school leaders and a group of middle leaders. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to others during break times. I visited a number of classes, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils. I also heard pupils read from Year 2 and Year 6. I carried out a work scrutiny of pupils' work across the school with the head of key stage 2. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. I took account of 10 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 10 free-text responses. No responses were received to the online questionnaires for staff and pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe; records of training; safeguarding checks and attendance information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.