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Mr A Carry
Principal
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Lea Vale Road
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Dear Mr Carry

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since that time, there have been a significant number of staff changes and the school has converted to become part of Saint Nicholas Owen Catholic Multi-Academy Company (MAC). You took up your appointment as principal in September 2014. You have created a senior leadership team that is clearly focused on further improving the school. You have established monitoring programmes that regularly check the quality of teaching and learning and the impact that it has on pupils' progress. You, the academy committee representatives and directors know the school well and work closely together to ensure that focused support is put in place to improve outcomes. As a result, pupils reach standards which are above average by the time they leave Year 6.

You have taken effective action to address the areas identified by the previous inspection. Writing standards across school have improved because pupils have more opportunities to write in different subjects across the curriculum as well as in English. You have introduced a new data tracking system, which enables you and your teachers to identify any areas that need addressing and, as a result, teaching is more focused on pupils' learning needs. However, the most able pupils, including those in the early years, are not always consistently challenged to ensure that they reach the standards that they are capable of.

Performance management is integral for all staff now and, as a result, a clearer understanding of roles and accountabilities is evident. This more rigorous process is holding all staff to account and standards are rising.

You have created a school that pupils, parents and staff are pleased to be part of and this is evident from their responses to the questionnaires. Pupils are kind to one another and support each other with their learning. Older pupils look after the younger pupils at breaktimes and are proud to be able to take on these roles and responsibilities. Staff also feel proud to be part of the school community. New staff are welcomed and feel supported and are guided through their induction process.

Safeguarding is effective.

All relevant checks on staff, visitors and volunteers are carried out rigorously. Training is up to date and record-keeping is accurate.

You have created a culture in which safeguarding is at the heart of the school. Staff take their responsibilities very seriously and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns. The school has well-developed safeguarding processes and procedures which meet the statutory requirements, although a clearer overview of all documentation would enable you to report to the academy committee representatives more effectively. Safeguarding training is part of the induction programme for all staff, and any updates are shared with staff immediately.

Pupils' attendance is tracked carefully and any absence is followed up immediately. As a result, attendance is good. Pupils said, and their parents agreed, that they enjoy coming to school because they feel safe and staff care for them. Pupils said that bullying is rare and 'if it does happen, bullies are dealt with quickly by the staff so that it doesn't happen again.' Pupils spoken to have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in and outside of school. You have developed good relationships with outside agencies, which enable pupils to feel supported and to make good progress.

Inspection findings

- The school has faced a number of challenges over the last few years, which have led to a high turnover of staff. However, under your leadership, along with the support of the academy committee and directors, the school is moving forward positively.
- Academy committee representatives and directors are committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for pupils. They understand the strengths of the school and work closely with you and the school improvement partner to develop clear action plans to address the areas that need further improvement. You are already implementing the actions and the results are clearly evident.
- Being part of a family of schools has enabled you and your staff team to access training and expertise, and to share best practice. The result of this is that staff are now more confident at using assessment to inform planning and to feed into

the next steps in pupils' learning.

- Progress during lessons and in books demonstrates that teachers have high expectations of the majority of pupils. However, in some classes, less skilful questioning is evident, which does not enable the most able pupils to reach their potential. This lack of challenge for the most able pupils was also evident in the responses to the pupil and parent questionnaires. You have recognised that this is an area that needs further work and it is a focus in your school development plan.
- You and your leadership team identified writing to be an area that needed further improvement. As a result of staff training and the implementation of a new phonics scheme, writing progress and attainment have improved across the school. During the inspection, it became clear that a wide range of writing opportunities is available across the curriculum. Pupils' progress in books was evident and teachers ensure that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Phonics is taught consistently well across school. Staff have received good-quality training to deliver the phonics scheme, and this is now impacting positively in Reception and across key stage 1.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They take pride in their work and are keen to improve. Pupils welcome their peers who have additional needs and help them to succeed in school. Most pupils said that behaviour is good.
- The majority of children join Reception with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age or above. You and your staff team provide good routines and high expectations, and children follow these cheerfully. However, further work is needed to accelerate the progress of the most able children in the Reception year. Staff knowledge and expertise do not enable them to sufficiently challenge the most able. You have recognised this as a weakness and you are already putting in the support needed to address this issue.
- Pupils' attendance reflects their enjoyment of school and is above the national average. Pupils said that they 'love' coming to school. All parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire said that their child is happy in school. For pupils whose attendance falls below national average, leaders take effective action to address this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Teaching across the school, including in the early years, challenges the most able pupils to enable them to achieve the standards of which they are capable.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy committee, the chair of the board of directors, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dudley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Brunt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your vice principal and your key stage 1/early years lead. I also spoke to members of your academy committee and directors from Saint Nicholas Owen Catholic Multi-Academy Company. I spoke to a few groups of pupils, including pupils who have support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities, about their school experience. You and I visited all classes. We spoke to children and looked at their work and their learning environment. In addition, I checked the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated the school's documentation in relation to pupils' performance, improvement planning, attendance and monitoring records. I took account of 58 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and spoke to parents before school.