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Mr John Alexander
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Junior School
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Dear Mr Alexander

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018, 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 2014.

This school continues to be a good school.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Your vision for improvement is clearly articulated to the school community and drives your actions to tackle the areas that could be even better. The vast majority of parents, carers and staff believe the school to be well led and managed. You have actively sought support and professional development from beyond the school for you and your team to continually improve standards of education for pupils. You demonstrate a clear commitment to succession planning and have developed the skills of current teachers in the school to become effective middle leaders. As a result, they are having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

Leaders and staff are committed to providing pupils with a well-rounded curriculum experience and pupils appreciate the interesting and wide-ranging experiences on offer. You have rightly identified that a more rigorous approach to assessing pupils' progress across subjects other than English and mathematics, for example in art, would further support improvement.

You and your leadership team have dealt effectively with the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work in writing and mathematics. Pupils respond

positively to teachers' high expectations and were keen to demonstrate the improvements they had made. As a result, progress in these subjects has improved. In 2017, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected and greater depth standards were above the national average in both writing and mathematics. Even so, you have rightly identified that boys do not progress as well as girls and you are putting measures in place to address this.

You and your staff care deeply about the pupils' welfare and provide them with consistently strong levels of guidance. You also ensure that transition arrangements into the school and on to secondary school prepare pupils well for the next stage in their learning. Pupils are confident, friendly and polite and were very keen to speak to me during my visit. Pupils work hard in lessons and try their best. Pupils told me that work is challenging and interesting. The redevelopment of the playground space provides pupils with an exciting range of activities. Pupils engage in both physical and competitive play in a harmonious way. They told me that bullying is rare, but were confident that if it did occur, it would be dealt with quickly.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive regular training so that they are kept up to date with the most recent safeguarding advice. Procedures are robust and clearly understood by staff. Governors understand their role and visit regularly to check that all the necessary recruitment checks on staff have been carried out.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection told me that they feel safe. This was also the case with pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Pupils commented that 'adults are kind' and that they know who to speak to if they have a concern. Pupils are taught how to stay safe through the curriculum and in assemblies. The school arranges regular visits from external organisations, such as the police and a national charity, to complement this work. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. For example, they could explain how to be safe online and when using social media.

The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey and the school's survey in July 2017 agree that their children are happy and safe. Some parents commented positively on the strong dedication of staff and the school's good pastoral care.

Inspection findings

- We began by evaluating leaders' actions to improve the progress of the most able boys in reading. Although boys' progress was in line with the national average in 2017, it was not as strong overall as previous Year 6 cohorts. In addition, over time, boys' progress has not been as strong as that of girls.
- We visited a number of classrooms to observe pupils reading. I read with pupils and talked to them about their reading. You and your leaders are taking effective

steps to strengthen pupils' progress in reading by putting in place a number of new approaches this year. Pupils enjoy the structured whole-class reading sessions and say that these are improving their ability to read aloud and understand texts. This is complemented effectively by small-group reading sessions where pupils read books that are matched to their abilities and interests, including texts designed to capture boys' interests and motivate them to read.

- Reading records are used well to check that pupils read regularly, both at home and in school. The pupils I heard read did so with confidence and expression. Pupils say that they are improving their reading and particularly understand how reading can support them in improving their writing. They feel that there are now sufficient books to engage and challenge them and as a result they are enthusiastic about reading.
- The actions that you have taken have resulted in improvement in pupils' progress in reading. The vast majority of the most able boys are making good or better gains in their reading skills, particularly the younger pupils. However, we agreed that there is further work to do to enable the most able pupils to articulate what they need to do next to improve their reading. This is particularly so with regard to comprehension skills such as inference and deduction, where they were unable to explain how they can deepen their reading skills. We agreed that this would further improve pupils' outcomes.
- For the next focus, we agreed that I would consider how effectively leaders have improved the curriculum and pupils' outcomes in art. We chose this focus because you explained that previously the quality of teaching had not been as effective as leaders wanted. You now evaluate art as a strength in the school. We looked at art around the school, talked to pupils and I met with the art leader.
- You and your leaders have a passion for the subject and are committed to ensuring that art has a high profile. The leadership team has used surveys and observations to accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of art. Together, leaders have taken effective action to address the areas that needed improvement. The implementation of a new scheme of work is ensuring that pupils are taught a range of techniques, learn about the work of different types of artists and make progress in the development of artistic skills. Leaders model teaching techniques and skills. This is developing teachers' confidence and ensures that they know how to support pupils to make good gains in their skills.
- Pupils say that they are proud of their involvement in producing the high-quality art work displayed around the school. They recently enjoyed working with a parent to create a larger piece of art in the playground. Pupils also appreciate the way they are able to use their art skills in other subjects, as well as the wide range of artists they have studied. Pupils can talk confidently about the skills and techniques that they have learned and how these help them to make progress and produce work of a high standard.
- Leaders' focus on art has paid off. Art is taught consistently well across the school and pupils routinely produce high-quality work using a range of skills and techniques. Nevertheless, pupils' progress in art (as well as in other subjects beyond reading, writing and mathematics) is not assessed to establish rates of progress, or to enable leaders to evaluate provision and outcomes. Consequently,

leaders are unable to pinpoint their efforts to raise standards even further.

- Finally, I evaluated how effectively leaders and governors carry out their statutory responsibilities, with particular regard to responding to parental views and providing information. You rightly acknowledged that, at the start of the inspection, some information on the school website was either missing or misleading because it was out of date. I scrutinised school documentation, met with the chair of the governing body and looked at the minutes of governors' meetings.
- The governing body has a good understanding of its statutory duties. Minutes of meetings illustrate that governors routinely challenge the actions of leaders to ensure that the very best decisions are made for the future of the school and its pupils. Governors keep abreast of current strengths and weaknesses in achievement across the school and understand the priorities for improvement. Governors have clearly defined roles and visit the school to ensure that they are fully informed about its work. They regularly attend external training and share what they have learned with the wider governing body. The documentation I reviewed indicates that you and the governing body listen to parents' views or concerns and respond to them promptly and appropriately.
- Governors have recently checked the website and identified suitable actions for improvement. Nevertheless, we did agree the need for leaders and governors to follow up on agreed actions in a more timely way than has been the case in the past. You and your leaders ensured that all the missing and inaccurate information on the website was added or updated by the end of the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of reading routinely challenges all groups of pupils to deepen their reading comprehension skills
- in art, teachers assess pupils' progress rigorously and use this information effectively to further strengthen pupils' outcomes
- the school website is updated regularly to ensure that it meets statutory requirements and information is kept up to date.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Morrison

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, the art leader, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with leaders and scrutinised pupils' books during these visits. I listened to pupils read in lessons and heard boys from Year 3 to Year 6 read. I met formally with a group of pupils and talked to pupils and staff informally around the school. I took into consideration 19 responses to Parent View, including eight written comments, 90 responses to a recent school questionnaire for parents, 49 pupil survey responses and 20 staff survey responses. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's plans for improvement, safeguarding documentation, assessment information on pupils' progress and information relating to governance.