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5 February 2018

Mrs Elizabeth Lloyd  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's RC Primary School  
Wellington Road  
Todmorden  
Lancashire  
OL14 5HP

Dear Mrs Lloyd

### **No formal designation inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School, Todmorden**

Following my visit to your school on 23 and 24 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance); the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils and outcomes for pupils at the school.

### **Evidence**

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with you, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders, a group of pupils, parents, three representatives from the governing body and a school effectiveness officer from the local authority. I also spoke with a representative from the diocese via telephone. You and I visited every classroom to observe teaching and learning and scrutinise the work in pupils' books. I also scrutinised documentation such as improvement plans, assessment information, attendance records and analysis, external reviews and minutes from governing body meetings.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

The school is much smaller in size than the average primary school. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is a lower-than-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Since the last inspection there have been substantial changes to staffing. The substantive headteacher left the school soon after the last inspection. Then an interim headteacher was in post for two terms until September 2017 when you began your post as permanent headteacher. Almost all other teachers were also new in September 2017, including an assistant headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and Year 2 teacher. In October 2017, the early years leader began maternity leave and two temporary part-time teachers are currently covering this role. The Year 1 class also has a long-term supply teacher.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The urgency with which leaders and governors have responded to the special measures judgement has been hindered by the changes in leadership and turnover of staff. However, your appointment, along with a team of high-quality teachers and leaders, in September 2017, has meant that actions are now beginning to gather pace.

You have been committed to quickly establishing this new team of leaders and teachers. Already, they are proving to be appropriately skilled, have the highest expectations of pupils and are ready for the challenge ahead. Underpinning this has been a focus on developing consistency of approach to teaching and learning and developing a shared responsibility for pupils' outcomes. Consequently, there are early signs of improvement.

Addressing a number of health and safety inadequacies has been a priority for you in your first months in post. A safeguarding action plan is now in place to make sure all aspects of safeguarding practice are considered carefully by leaders. Safeguarding training has taken place for all staff, and leaders check to make sure it has the desired effect. As a result, staff know how to recognise and respond to any sign of concern. Incidents are recorded clearly, acted upon promptly and additional support is provided when necessary for vulnerable pupils. This is promoting a much stronger culture of safeguarding.

Leaders have devised an assessment system which is starting to give teachers and leaders clear information about any gaps in pupils' learning. This is enabling teachers to plan for pupils' next learning steps and be accountable for the progress their pupils are making. You are aware that, at present, assessment information is not as accurate as it needs to be and does not provide leaders and governors with a

precise enough picture of pupils' attainment and progress. You are keen to quickly develop this system so that it becomes increasingly effective and allows you to identify and quickly address any underperformance.

You have implemented a new schedule of activities to check the impact of leaders' actions. This cycle of self-evaluation has resulted in your accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has enabled you to identify the most pressing priorities. However, the valuable information you hold has not yet been combined together to produce a school development plan. Some action plans do exist for aspects of school improvement work. However, the success criteria are not sharply focused on pupils' outcomes to enable leaders to bring about improvements at a fast enough pace.

You have been particularly effective in creating a culture where pupils are becoming less afraid to make mistakes and are starting to value the opportunity to carry out more challenging tasks. Parents I spoke to feel that you have made significant improvements to the school in your short time in post. They say their children are happier and more interested in their learning and that there is a greater focus on the importance of academic achievement. The responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, echo these positive views of the school's improvement.

Governors have not been sufficiently focussed on addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. For example, the external reviews of governance and pupil premium have had negligible impact. In addition, the recommendations made in the pupil premium review have not been rigorously responded to. Therefore, the weaknesses which were identified still exist. Additionally, governors have not been aware enough of their statutory duties. Governors have not ensured that the school's single central record has been checked to make sure that recruitment checks are carried out and recorded appropriately. Likewise, the website is not compliant with the requirements set out by the Department for Education and a number of policies are also out of date. Leaders and governors are working to address this as quickly as possible. Governors are aware that the staffing in the school's Nursery is not compliant with statutory requirements and have been working with the local authority and diocese to try and find a solution. This is now an urgent priority.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching and learning in the school has improved as a result of effective staff recruitment. A training day at the beginning of the year was successful in setting out your high expectations for teaching and learning. You are making sure that teachers receive regular feedback about their teaching so that there is much greater consistency in the approaches used throughout school. This is supporting pupils in being able to make stronger progress.

A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is giving pupils the opportunity to

take part in a range of tasks which are more challenging and require them to reason and explain their thinking. This is resulting in pupils developing a more secure understanding of the concepts they are learning. Consequently, pupils feel more challenged in their mathematics tasks and demonstrate positive learning behaviours. The activities are carefully tailored to pupils' needs and take account of any gaps in their learning. At the same time, teachers also provide age-appropriate content so that pupils are able to catch up from any previous underachievement as quickly as possible.

You are aware that, at present, teachers in different year groups are using a range of approaches to teach phonics. You have identified the need for a consistent approach so that pupils can learn to read as quickly as possible. In Reception, staff are currently trialling a new approach. You are aware that an investment in staff training and resources is the next step in improving the effectiveness of phonics teaching further.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Leaders' raised expectations are very evident around school. This is resulting in improving learning behaviours and pupils taking increasing pride in the presentation of work in their books. Pupils are also becoming more interested in their learning and it is evident to see how they are absorbed in the tasks provided by teachers.

Pupils are very positive about their school and enjoy their learning, saying that teachers challenge them and make their learning interesting. They learn about how to stay safe, for example on the internet or when crossing roads. They understand about different forms of bullying and have trusted adults they can talk to if they have any worries at all. They say that bullying is very rare and that pupils are kind and caring towards each other. They know that pupils sometimes do fall out but that any incident of misbehaviour is always sorted out by staff. Pupils are encouraged to make the right choices and take pride in their work through a range of reward systems. For example, the celebration assembly recognises 'wow' work and pupils who have demonstrated good manners. The impact of this is seen as pupils move calmly around the building, holding doors open for adults and speaking politely and with good manners.

You have noticed a marked improvement in pupils' behaviour since your time in post but are not yet recording this information in a consistent format and reporting it to governors. You are keen to establish greater rigour into the systems for analysing behaviour and bullying incidents so that any trends and patterns are quickly spotted and addressed. This will also help you to demonstrate the improvements which leaders are making.

Leaders' actions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence have been successful. Raising parents' awareness of the importance of good attendance through the weekly newsletter, increased face-to-face dialogue with parents and the

support of an education welfare officer are proving positive. Attendance overall is now much closer to the national average and persistent absence is currently below average. However, it is not clear whether improvements have been made for all pupil groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, as this data is not currently tracked and analysed by leaders or governors.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Progress was slow in improving outcomes for pupils in the months following the inspection as a result of the substantial staffing and leadership changes and the quality of teaching. Consequently, pupils' outcomes in 2017 showed little improvement apart from in mathematics, which had been central to the school's improvement work.

However, raised expectations from staff and clear guidance from all leaders now in post mean that pupils are starting to make better progress. This is evident in their work in books and in lessons. Staff are deployed effectively. For example, the most highly skilled staff are working with pupils who are not on track with their phonics. This is helping them to secure faster progress. The current Year 2 pupils who did not meet the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check are catching up well and are making strong progress.

Mathematics books show that pupils are making much better progress as a result of the new approach and staff training which has taken place. You also identified that writing outcomes were a concern in 2017 and, with the support of the local authority, have secured a bid to work with a national leader of education and specialist leader of education to improve standards in English. This work is due to begin very soon. The teaching of reading in key stage 2 is in the early stages of development and has begun with igniting pupils' interest in reading high-quality texts. They are now more able to talk about their reading, make justifications for their reasoning and explain their ideas. You are now looking to develop their written responses to reading tasks.

The reading books in school do not provide an appropriate match to pupils' current phonics learning for those who are in the early stages of learning to read. This means that they are not able to practise reading at home with books which they can be successful with and that will develop their fluency. You are keen to address this so that it supports pupils in learning to read more quickly.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided significant and appropriate support for the school and its leaders, following the last inspection. However, the impact has been diluted as many of the staff who have benefited from training and support have now left the school. Local authority partnership bids, including one for English which is due to begin imminently, are continuing to provide the school with a high level of

support, though. The diocese secured the support of an interim headteacher while recruitment of a permanent headteacher took place and have supported governors to secure several other new appointments. The local authority and diocese continue to work together in making preparations for the school to become an academy in the next academic year.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- To urgently produce a school development plan which includes precise success criteria and milestones to help leaders check the impact of actions taken.
- For leaders and governors to quickly act on the recommendations made from the external reviews of pupil premium and governance.
- To introduce a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics and ensure that books are matched to pupils' phonics skills so they are able to make more rapid progress.
- Further develop the assessment system so that information becomes increasingly accurate and allows leaders to check the impact of their actions to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Take prompt action to ensure that the statutory requirements for staffing in the Nursery are met.
- To add greater rigour to the systems for tracking and analysing attendance and behaviour and reporting this to governors in a consistent format.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**