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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Paula Lowry
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic and CofE (VA) Primary School
Calver Crescent
Staveley
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S43 3LY

Dear Mrs Lowry

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic and CofE (VA) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead the school decisively and have built a strong staff team with the capacity to drive improvement. You have strengthened relationships in the community by developing a sense of mutual trust and respect. Children and parents and carers value the support they are given by a knowledgeable and caring team. Governors work effectively with you and other staff to promote positive outcomes for pupils.

Leaders have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Revised assessment systems have helped teachers to have a greater understanding of where pupils need help. This is raising standards throughout the school. The curriculum is engaging and meets the needs of the pupils. A focus on health and well-being promotes self-esteem and confidence among pupils. This helps them to make good progress across all areas of learning. Pupils enjoy school and said that they 'learn new things every day'.

A calm, welcoming atmosphere permeates the school. An energy and buzz in all classrooms reflect your commitment to make a positive difference for every pupil. Parents praised the communication between home and school and said that they are delighted with the progress made by their children, both socially and academically. They appreciate the breakfast and after-school clubs and feel that the extra-curricular activities are a great addition to the day.

Teachers plan interesting activities that engage pupils in learning. Pupils carefully follow instructions and take advice from their teachers on how to improve their work. Some pupils do not persevere with their tasks, however, and give in too easily when they face a challenge. This means that they do not develop as much pride in their work as others. Leaders have been successful in improving the teaching of mathematics. A revised curriculum and training for all teachers have led to pupils making faster progress. Leaders acknowledge, however, that pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills. The leadership team's more rigorous checks have highlighted that pupils, and particularly disadvantaged pupils, are not always making the progress they need to reach the highest standards across the curriculum.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. You and other staff help pupils to develop a strong sense of what is right and wrong, and to respect diversity. Pupils value the opportunity to undertake roles of responsibility, particularly through the school parliament in which they act as 'the eyes and ears of the school'. You have been successful in improving attendance by introducing a number of initiatives that motivate families to bring their children to school on time. When there are concerns over attendance, you work closely with families and other agencies to reduce the amount of absence from school.

The governing body is committed to helping you drive improvement through the priorities you have identified. Governors use their expertise effectively. Their regular monitoring visits and the detailed information you provide help the governing body to understand the effects of the actions you and other colleagues have taken. Governors ask challenging questions to ensure that the school directs resources effectively to secure further improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A vigilant culture of safeguarding is visible throughout the school. Child protection records are detailed and of a good quality. Effective systems are in place to ensure that all staff contribute to relevant case files, receive timely updates about the involvement of external agencies and are notified of the outcomes of meetings. Pupils spoke confidently about how to keep safe online and in other aspects of their lives. The school's website contains detailed information to support parents in keeping their child safe in the cyber world. During regular discussions with pupils, teachers identify where pupils need more information about how to keep themselves safe and deal with those issues effectively through the curriculum.

You have ensured that staff and governors are trained well and are knowledgeable about the signs and symptoms of potential abuse, including radicalisation and gang culture. The 'all ears box' and 'anti-stigma' team are examples of how you encourage pupils to discuss any troubles. Pupils I met said that there is no bullying in school and they know where to go to seek help if they are worried. They are learning to manage their feelings and emotions extremely well.

Inspection findings

- You provide clear vision and direction for the school and this is supporting rapid improvement. Since your recent appointment as substantive headteacher, you have used expertise from the local authority to help you to move initiatives forward. Staff appreciate and value being included in strategic planning. There is a strong sense of cohesion among staff and a determination to succeed.
- The introduction of single-year-group teaching has placed a stronger emphasis on developing the knowledge and skills appropriate for each year group. As a result, many pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes disadvantaged pupils. Some pupils now exceed these standards.
- You have changed the way in which teaching staff are deployed to ensure that pupils who are not secure in their understanding receive additional support. These daily interventions have a positive impact on building pupils' self-esteem and ensuring that they make faster progress.
- Work to develop the assessment system is well under way. This is driven by your relentless focus on improving standards. Members of the leadership team are continuing to refine systems. They are working closely with other practitioners to enhance provision. You recognise that the more able and disadvantaged pupils are not yet making the good progress from their starting points that you expect. To secure faster progress, you are determined to improve attitudes to learning by building pupils' resilience and perseverance. You are also raising aspirations for all pupils.
- You have invested a significant amount in improving the teaching of mathematics. This has had positive results. The new scheme provides a consistent approach to teaching. You have also provided a structured programme of professional development for all teaching staff. Together, these have brought faster progress for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Teachers are not yet providing enough opportunities, however, for pupils to apply what they have learned in mathematics and develop their reasoning skills so that they can successfully tackle challenging problems.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers create learning activities across the curriculum that enable all pupils, but particularly those from a disadvantaged background, to reach the highest standards of which they are capable
- teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics
- teachers strengthen pupils' attitudes to learning by building up their resilience and perseverance, and by cultivating a greater pride in their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Nash
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, we discussed your own evaluation of the school, and I shared my key lines of enquiry with you. You accompanied me as I visited each class, spending a short time in each. I met with several other members of staff, four governors, including the chair of the governing body, a group of pupils and a number of parents. I held discussions with different leaders about safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, the curriculum and measuring pupils' progress. I viewed a range of documents and considered information related to attendance and how the pupil premium funding is spent. I visited breakfast club and spoke with a group of pupils and members of staff. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Together, we looked at a wide range of pupils' work. I examined the school's website to check that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information. I analysed the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for parents, staff and pupils.