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Mrs Kathy Blackledge  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Cedar Road  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Mrs Blackledge

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

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 October 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your calm leadership hides a steely drive to champion pupils' academic and personal development needs. You have united all members of the school community to focus on improving outcomes for pupils. The deputy headteacher, middle leaders and knowledgeable governors all contribute to a strong culture of ambition in the school. Leaders are accurate in their evaluation of school strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics are improving at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. The work in key stage 2 pupils' books indicates that your sustainable approach to improving standards, particularly in writing and mathematics, may yet bear greater gains.

Leaders have created an environment where pupils develop a clear love of learning. The Christian values of the school underpin pupils' interactions with each other. Leaders have nurtured a culture of respect which influences the excellent learning characteristics of pupils. Governors, staff and pupils are proud to be part of the school. Staff maintain excellent relationships with pupils, who appreciate and respect staff in equal measure. Parents are overwhelmingly positive. All parents responding to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to other parents.

The school has responded well to the areas for improvement that were highlighted at the last inspection. Your efforts to improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing have been effective in bringing pupils' achievement in line with national standards by the end of key stage 2. Teachers plan challenges for the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, the results of which show an improving trend across the school. Key stage 1 standards in English and mathematics compare well to national averages. Yet, leaders have noted that too few disadvantaged pupils reach the highest standards. We agreed that some

of the most able pupils, and the most able disadvantaged pupils, could be challenged further in their reading and mathematics work. We also agreed that the information provided to governors on the use of pupil premium funding does not allow them to check the progress of disadvantaged pupils in enough depth.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils feel safe at St Joseph's because of the nurture and support that they receive from staff. Staff have a clear awareness of risks facing pupils because of the comprehensive training that they receive. Leaders update staff regularly and this is successful in creating a culture of vigilance. The role of the inspirational learning mentor is key to ensuring that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils value this support and access it readily.

Governors exemplify good practice by reviewing and improving already-effective processes and procedures. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

### **Inspection findings**

- As part of this inspection, we agreed to look at how effectively leaders use the pupil premium to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress in mathematics and in spelling in key stage 2. Leaders effectively identify support for disadvantaged pupils according to their needs. This sometimes includes other vulnerable pupils. The learning mentor provides valuable and highly effective support for pupils. The pupils I spoke to said this makes them feel comfortable, safe and secure so that they can focus on their learning. Leaders have accurately identified spelling as the central issue in improving pupils' writing. Their focus on extending pupils' vocabulary is starting to result in marked signs of improvement, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6. Pupils' independent written work demonstrates improving standards in spelling. Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils of the same ability. However, in mathematics too few disadvantaged pupils achieve the highest standards. Although there has been a whole-school focus on improving pupils' reasoning skills, governors do not have opportunities to evaluate the pupil premium funding well enough to plan for accelerating pupils' progress further. This is especially true of the most able disadvantaged pupils. Leaders do not share detailed information about the success of this funding with governors. As such, we agreed that governors do not hold leaders to account for the effectiveness of the pupil premium in enough depth.
- We also agreed to look at how effectively the most able key stage 2 pupils are challenged to achieve the highest standards in reading. Leaders have identified the need to challenge the most able pupils further in their reading. We agreed that this remains an area for development. This is also evident in the pupils' responses to the inspection survey. Twenty per cent of pupils reported that they are challenged only in 'some lessons'. However, staff have successfully focused on developing pupils' inference skills, and in extending the range of pupils' vocabulary. Pupils are becoming more confident readers. Their analysis of texts are leading pupils to engage in increasingly complex discussions about meaning and the effective use of language. Pupils' learning is at its best when their participation in tasks is high. Pupils are enthusiastic about the range of

new texts that the school has bought. Staff have inspired a love of reading through the engaging tasks that they plan for pupils. The introduction of learning journals for reading in Year 5 and Year 6 has been instrumental for leaders in tracking pupils' progress. Teachers use this information well to target pupils who can improve their reading skills further. However, the focus of much of the support work is helping pupils to catch up rather than challenging the most able learners. Some of the most able pupils themselves identified that they do not receive as much support as other pupils. We agreed that some of the most able pupils lack the challenge needed to ensure that they achieve the highest standards in reading.

- Finally, we agreed to look at whether the strengths in behaviour have been maintained since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have ensured that the ethos of the school continues to promote strong Christian values. Pupils say these values inform their choices and how they interact positively with others. At playtimes, pupils agree that behaviour is good. Logs of incidents are scant because staff address poor behaviour immediately so that issues do not escalate. One of the pupils that I spoke to said that staff 'notice little tensions' and address these proactively. The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View agreed with pupils and leaders that the few incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively and that bullying is extremely rare. In class, pupils' learning characteristics are excellent. Pupils engage well with their learning at all times. Their reasoning skills have been developed extremely well so that they work together to achieve well. Children in the early years are a delight. The early years staff have ensured that they confidently explore their learning with others. As such, children in the Reception class make a flying start to their school life.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors review the effectiveness of the funding for disadvantaged pupils in greater depth to ensure that these pupils are challenged to achieve the highest standards in mathematics
- teachers further embed the challenge in reading to ensure that the most able and most able disadvantaged pupils reach the highest standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. Together, we visited all classes and spoke to pupils informally about their work during lessons. I heard pupils read their own and others' work as part of classroom activities and I listened to a group of key stage 2 pupils read. I reviewed documentation about safeguarding, which included the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I spoke with pupils about safeguarding, behaviour and different aspects of their work. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' writing, guided literacy books, reading journals and mathematics work. I analysed leaders' records of the monitoring of teaching and learning; governing body minutes; the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses; and the school development plan. I took into account 32 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and a letter from one parent. I also took account of 24 responses to the staff survey and 92 responses to the pupil survey.