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Mr Richard Hilton
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hilton

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses and are fully committed to its continual improvement. You have made sure that the school's improvement plan is appropriately focused. You and senior leaders ensure that everyone carries out the actions in your plan. Governors receive a range of comprehensive reports from leaders and regularly visit the school and speak to staff to monitor the school's work. Governors are keen to improve further their monitoring of the school. They fully understand the need to gather information beyond school staff, and seek information from external sources, such as the diocese. Governors have benefited from training to help them understand more about the progress pupils are making. However, the criteria against which success is measured are not always clear. This means that governors are not able to use this information effectively.

Staff are keen to improve their teaching and pupils' learning and consistently put in place the new initiatives and ways of teaching that are introduced. Middle leaders provide useful support to their colleagues to enable them to work on these new approaches successfully. For example, these leaders help teachers to plan lessons and have written 'help' booklets, and they regularly check whether teachers use the strategies consistently. However, they do not check the impact of these strategies on pupils' progress carefully enough. They therefore cannot evaluate how effective the approaches are.

Pupils are polite and well mannered around school. They generally focus well in lessons because teachers provide them with interesting tasks and activities. Adults provide effective additional support for those pupils who need it. For example, you recently received an accolade from the local authority for the support you give pupils who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The pupils I spoke with were articulate and eager to share their views about their school. They enjoy lessons and value the variety of opportunities to be creative through music, dance and art. They appreciate the choice of after-school clubs. They also explained that teachers set just the right amount of homework. As one pupil explained, 'School values our family time.'

Parents and carers are generally positive about the school. Typically, they say that it has a 'warm, friendly and welcoming' atmosphere and they are assured that their children are 'in safe hands'. One parent explained that, 'Pupils are encouraged to think of others and help whenever they can'. This is evident through the school's dedicated 'Mini Vinnies', a group of pupils who buddy anyone who is lonely on the playground and also help out in the wider community. Recently, this group organised collections for the food bank and made Candlemas cards for local residents and housebound parishioners. Most parents are confident that their child is making good progress and would recommend the school. One parent described it simply as 'the best school!'

In the previous inspection report, you were asked to raise standards and rates of progress by ensuring that pupils are set work in mathematics that requires them to apply their skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities and real-life situations. In one class, I saw pupils using weighing scales to check their estimates of the weight of real fruit, and in pupils' maths books, I saw that they were regularly solving challenging problems. In 2017, pupils' outcomes in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2 demonstrate that you have secured some improvement. Some Year 6 pupils I spoke with said that they are confident with arithmetic and their reasoning skills are improving. Recently, you and other leaders have increased the staff training you provide on this aspect, as you aim to challenge pupils to a deeper level of understanding and to achieve even better outcomes.

Leaders were also asked to provide more opportunities for pupils to write imaginatively and at length. It is clear from pupils' independent writing journals that they have many opportunities to do this. Teachers have inspired pupils to write throughout the curriculum. Pupils' outcomes in writing by the end of Year 6 in 2017 were broadly in line with the national average overall. However, you and your leaders have rightly recognised that boys did not achieve as well as girls in writing. You have already begun to tackle this issue.

Since the last inspection, you have made sure that the school's plans for improvement include more information about the progress you expect pupils to make. However, not all success criteria are clear enough for you to measure the impact of your actions and for governors to hold you to account with precision.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. New staff and volunteers are rigorously checked before working with pupils. The knowledgeable staff ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Recruitment records and records of safeguarding concerns are well maintained and managed. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and regularly updated and provides clear allocated lines of responsibility, including for governors. The safeguarding governor regularly visits school to carry out thorough checks of records and procedures, and reports back to the full governing body.

Pupils say that they know how to stay safe. The curriculum provides regular opportunities for them to learn about pertinent issues, such as e-safety. You provide workshops for pupils so they know how to keep themselves safe online and pupils have recently learned about mental health and self-harm. Pupils are confident they have an adult they can speak to in school if they are worried about anything. Staff know how to pass on any concerns they may have about the welfare of a pupil.

You ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. You also provide regular updates for staff and governors, ensuring that this important issue is at the forefront of everyone's minds. You focus on a range of specific issues, such as e-safety or sexting, and staff and governors have completed training on the government's 'Prevent' duty. Although staff receive appropriate and relevant training, the systems to record and track this training make it difficult for you to ensure that no member of staff is overlooked or has gaps in their knowledge.

Inspection findings

- Boys make less progress than girls, particularly in writing. Leaders are taking effective action to ensure that boys are engaged and motivated to write in all subjects. For example, leaders have introduced a new outdoor classroom and special themed weeks, such as animals or Diwali, where all pupils have opportunities to write about these topics. Teachers plan some exciting activities that stimulate pupils' interest in writing and pupils have entered several writing competitions. You are especially proud that some older pupils recently took first place in a regional 'Premier League' writing competition.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new programme to help staff improve how they teach grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers are consistently using the programme throughout school. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this strategy on the boys' independent writing. The school's current assessment information shows that boys' achievement in writing still has some way to go to catch up with that of girls, particularly in key stage 2. Moreover, leaders do not fully evaluate the impact of their actions to improve boys' progress.
- The deputy headteacher has a clear overview of how the pupil premium funding is spent. She is carefully monitoring the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in English and mathematics. Records show that pupils who are falling behind are provided with individual support and that teachers and teaching assistants jointly

assess the difference this makes for these individual pupils.

- The school's own assessment information shows that many disadvantaged pupils are making the progress you expect of them from their starting points. However, leaders have not identified with sufficient precision the barriers to learning faced by the individual disadvantaged pupils. This means that they have not been able to provide the specific support that will help them to make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders have not evaluated the impact of the pupil premium funding in sufficient detail to know what is working well and what is less successful. You make sure that governors receive regular updates on what actions have been taken and on the current achievement of disadvantaged pupils. However, this information is not detailed enough to enable governors to know which actions are working, and therefore to hold leaders to account thoroughly for the spending of this funding.
- Parents who expressed a view were unanimously positive about the start their children get in early years. They know their children are safe and well cared for, and they are exceptionally pleased with the progress their children make. During our tour of the classrooms, we saw that teachers in early years plan exciting and imaginative activities to capture children's interests. The classrooms are calm and productive and children focus well on their activities. During our visit to the Reception class (known in school as 'Foundation Stage 2'), children were excitedly writing a letter to a fairy after they had built replacements for some vandalised fairy houses. The children in Nursery (known in school as 'Foundation Stage 1') were eager to create collage pictures of the fairy. It was clear that adults have established high expectations, as children worked well alongside each other, using scissors and other resources with great care.
- The knowledgeable early years leader has clearly identified that children's communication and language skills are typically weaker than would be expected for their age when they start in Nursery. She has put in place appropriate actions, such as training staff to particularly support children with developing language and vocabulary, and has involved the local children's centre. The early years leader has also involved parents by inviting them into the classroom more and providing support for them to help their children at home, such as modelling talk with children. Current assessment information shows that children are making good progress in this area. The proportion of children achieving the good level of development by the end of Reception Year shows that most children have caught up and are where they need to be by the time they start Year 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop the role of middle leaders so they are able to evaluate the impact of the actions they take to improve pupils' learning and use this to inform future actions
- they identify more precisely the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, implementing actions to overcome them and evaluating their actions more

sharply so they know what works well, and can be held to account with greater rigour

- boys' progress in writing accelerates so that more of them are able to achieve the expected standards in their writing
- the system to record and track all safeguarding training ensures that no member of staff is overlooked.

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 Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Stylianides
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, the early years leader, three middle leaders and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the school's office manager, the breakfast club staff and several teachers and teaching assistants. I visited all classrooms with you and examined a range of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils informally during lessons and during a group discussion. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at the breakfast club, during playtime and in lessons.

I took into account the 31 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey and I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day. There were 14 responses to the Ofsted staff survey, which were also considered. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, the latest assessment information, a summary of the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan, and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.