

11 June 2018

Mrs Karen Bennett
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Hill Top
Hednesford
Cannock
Staffordshire
WS12 1DE

Dear Mrs Bennett

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 St Joseph's Catholic Primary was judged to be good in November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Pupils, staff and parents are very happy with their school. During the inspection, all of the pupils spoken to and the vast majority of parents indicated that they would recommend their school to others. Comments such as, 'The school is quite superb!' and, 'Our school is brilliant because it's very supportive and cares!' were typical of those received during the inspection. Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. They are proud of their school, and relationships with each other and adults are highly positive. Pupils are attentive and focused in lessons, and learning proceeds without interruption.

You and your team have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. You, the staff and governors take your church foundation very seriously and this is a key feature of the school. The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of customs and cultures of other countries. These are taught through focused weeks and visits to places of worship. Pupils benefit from visiting speakers who talk about a wide range of faiths and cultures, which are closely linked to fundamental British values. The school council is also leading a project on 'What does it mean to be a refugee?' to develop empathy for others and understand the reasons why people become refugees. As a result, you prepare pupils well

for life in modern Britain.

Parents are very positive about the school. They talk about how you and your staff have worked hard to engage with them. For example, you have involved parents in their children's learning through workshops and assemblies. Parents are highly supportive of the school's efforts to improve pupils' outcomes and provide pupils with additional learning experiences.

You have also worked to improve the level of challenge for the most able pupils. However, while work in pupils' books shows some evidence of challenge for these pupils, this is not yet consistent across all year groups. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve the higher standards of learning of which they are capable. You have also focused on developing the leadership skills of your subject leaders. For example, their action plans now have a sharper focus on pupils' outcomes. However, their monitoring of the impact of their actions to raise standards is yet to be developed.

You have introduced some changes to the teaching of reading across the school. However, teachers do not consistently provide pupils with reading books that are matched to their phonics skills. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should in reading. You acknowledge that further work is required to develop reading in a systematic way to improve standards further for all pupils. Additionally, while pupils correct and improve their work using accurate punctuation, they do not consistently apply their grammar and spelling skills as well as they should in their writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding processes and procedures are well embedded and fit for purpose, and as a result parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in school. Leaders and governors fulfil their statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff. You and your governors take every precaution to ensure that pupils are safe at school.

Staff receive frequent training and updates on how to ensure that pupils are safe and stay safe. You and the designated safeguarding lead are tenacious in following up any concerns you have. You keep careful records and follow up any concerns to ensure that pupils are safe. Members of the governing body make sure that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Pupils say incidents of bullying are rare and staff sort these out very quickly when they occur. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe, and the school deals well with conflict or potential bullying situations should they arise.

Inspection findings

- You have built a strong team of leaders, teachers and support staff in the school. Everyone works together to ensure that pupils get the best possible education. Training for staff, coaching and opportunities to share good practice in teaching across the school have been successful in securing consistency in the quality of teaching.
- You and your leaders accurately evaluate the quality of education provided at the school. You develop clear actions to further improve the school from this evaluation and check that your actions lead to improvements in the quality of education across the school.
- Governors also have an accurate view of what is working well and what could improve further because you provide them with detailed information about the impact of initiatives on improving teaching and pupils' academic performance. Although many are new to the role, governors ensure that they have clear roles and responsibilities. They often visit the school to check that the information they receive accurately reflects the school's performance. Consequently, governors now support and challenge the school with greater confidence.
- Leaders meet with teachers on a regular basis to discuss pupils' progress and attainment. This enables them to monitor pupils' progress closely and provide support where needed. Teachers' assessments are also moderated with other local schools to ensure that they are accurate. Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils and deliver a variety of interventions to boost pupils' academic and social development, increasing their confidence and resilience. As a result, the majority of pupils make rapid progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers challenge pupils, especially the most able, to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable in reading, writing and mathematics
- pupils consistently apply their spelling and grammar skills in their writing
- the teaching of reading is further improved, including matching pupils' reading books to their phonics abilities
- subject leaders receive further support to develop their leadership skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Khalid Din
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke to you, the governors, senior leaders, representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Birmingham, the designated safeguarding lead, the staff and a group of pupils. I met with some parents at the beginning of the day. I observed teaching and learning in all classes. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your self-evaluation and school development plan. I scrutinised pupils' books in lessons. I met with a group of pupils and looked at their books with them. I looked at a range of safeguarding documentation. I analysed the responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, as well as online staff and pupil questionnaires.