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Mrs Sue Tomkys
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tomkys

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Oxford

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 the school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your very strong and ambitious leadership and that of your senior team have ensured that the school continues to improve. You have developed consistent and detailed systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning and the impact it has on pupils' progress. Through clear communication, you share your high expectations with all staff. Leaders place great importance on training and development and have enabled teachers to work collaboratively and with specialists to further improve practice, particularly in mathematics. Staff are keen to develop their practice further and welcome the training opportunities that you provide.

Leaders are fulfilling the school's vision, 'Let us protect with love all that God has given us.' In Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, it is clear that parents and carers appreciate the work of the school. One parent typified the views of many, saying, 'The atmosphere is great, loving and caring,' and another said, 'This is a well-led, calm, kind and inclusive school.' These views about the school's caring culture were confirmed by pupils, one of whom commented, 'The school is very supportive. Adults really care for us.' Parents commend your strong leadership.

Pupils share parents' highly positive views about the quality of education at the school. This is because they find their lessons interesting and enjoy the trips, outdoor learning and visitors that you arrange. Pupils told me that they particularly enjoy the wide range of clubs and activities offered by the school, including choir, chess and the forest school programme.

Governors continue to provide you with support but also offer robust challenge to ensure that you and senior leaders are held to account for pupils' outcomes. They know the school well and are passionate about its role within the local and church communities. You and governors regularly review the school's well-targeted improvement plan. You are rigorous in your evaluation of the impact of actions taken to improve pupils' progress and attainment. Governors keep their knowledge and skills up to date through regular training, including safeguarding.

Pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are significant strengths of the school. Pupils are highly confident and enthusiastic learners. This is reflected in the above-average attendance since 2017. They are very considerate and respectful to others. Pupils appreciate and respect those from different cultural and religious backgrounds. British values are promoted very effectively through the curriculum and the school's family ethos. The school enables pupils to make informed choices about their future lives, with this being underpinned by Year 6 pupils attending a citizenship course. Older pupils take on responsibilities such as school council representatives and anti-bullying and e-safety ambassadors.

In early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was in line with the national average in 2017 and showed an increase on the previous year's outcomes. Children currently in early years are making strong progress from starting points that are broadly typical for their age but with the additional challenge that half the children entering school do so with English as an additional language. Attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2 continues to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics. An increased proportion of pupils in key stage 2 are working at greater depth in all subjects. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check, at the end of Year 1, is in line with the national average but exceeds it by the end of Year 2. Your accurate assessment information about the progress that current pupils make helps you to target support and interventions so that pupils do not fall behind.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors have a clear understanding of their safeguarding duties and are effective in carrying them out. Leaders undertake appropriate checks on all adults in regular contact with pupils, and these are scrutinised on a regular basis. Governors commission an annual audit of the school's safeguarding practice from the local authority. Staff are well trained and know how to identify any signs that pupils are at risk. They understand the school's systems for reporting concerns and said that safeguarding is part of the school's culture. Safeguarding records are well kept and any child protection referrals are monitored robustly.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe through assemblies and personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons that cover topics such as e-safety and mental health

awareness. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and there is always an adult to go to for help. They said that bullying is rare and if it happens adults deal with it quickly. Leaders' approaches to early intervention for vulnerable pupils are a particular strength. The vast majority of parents and carers said that their children are happy and well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- In order to determine that the school remains good and is improving, I wanted to find out how well the most able children are achieving in early years in writing. In 2017, the most able children's attainment and progress in writing was not as strong as that of the most able in early years nationally. The school's own assessment information shows that there have been clear improvements in the progress that current Reception children are making in writing. This is because there is more emphasis on the development of fine motor skills so that children now hold a pencil more effectively, and adults have high expectations of children's achievement. The early years leader is aware that this continues to be an area for further improvement.
- During the inspection, I also looked at how well pupils achieve in writing at key stage 1. Teachers have improved the way they teach writing skills, using a wide range of texts to stimulate pupils' writing in different genres. This has resulted in pupils' rapid progress and increased attainment. In 2017, while the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard was in line with the national average, the proportion achieving greater depth was above.
- Following a recommendation at the last inspection, the school prioritised improving pupils' outcomes in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2. Leaders introduced a new, structured approach to the teaching of mathematics with an emphasis on 'keeping up' rather than 'catching up'. Staff received highly effective training and support. Over the last two years, pupils' progress has accelerated. As a result, outcomes in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2 were above the national averages in 2017.
- You have strengthened the curriculum so it is now very stimulating. You are providing pupils with a diverse curriculum which broadens their minds and helps them think critically beyond what is in front of them. Pupils talk incredibly enthusiastically about their learning and about the wide range of activities they engage in, both inside and outside the classroom. You have a nimble approach to curriculum planning, continually reviewing provision against the interests of the pupils and the talents of staff. Recent changes include Lego programming, ballroom dancing and a design and technology module focusing on puppetry. You contextualise the curriculum through a celebration of pupils' multicultural links.
- Finally, I checked on the rate of pupils' attendance, with a particular focus on disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attendance levels have improved for all pupils over the last two years and are now in line with or above the national average. You have tightened procedures to check on the reasons for absence and strengthened your partnership with parents over the importance of regular attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able children in early years are appropriately challenged and expectations raised so that progress in writing accelerates.

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 Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sir Robin Boshier
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher and discussed the school's self-evaluation together with information about pupils' progress and improvements since the last inspection. Together, we visited classes in all year groups and looked at a range of pupils' work in books. I met with pupils to talk to them about their experience of school life and how safe they feel. I held meetings with middle leaders, the chair and one other governor. I spoke with the local authority system leader by telephone. I analysed a range of written evidence, including: the school's self-evaluation form; the school improvement plan; the current information about pupils' progress; the single central record; and other documents relating to safeguarding and the school's curriculum. I took account of the views of 68 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments, and the views of parents who spoke to me before the start of the school day. I also considered the views of 29 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey and the views of pupils we met during the day.