

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



19 June 2018

Mrs Julia Wallace
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Rowley Road
Whitnash
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire
CV31 2LJ

Dear Mrs Wallace

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 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.

You were appointed as headteacher in September 2015. You made an impressive start and lost no time in working closely with staff, governors, parents and carers, and pupils. You have set a clear and ambitious direction for the school. You have continued to build on the school's strengths and further developed the quality of teaching through effective and focused training for staff. Improved systems and procedures are now in place, especially in relation to the teaching of mathematics and the accuracy of assessment in general across the school.

You have created a positive and calm working environment and set high expectations for pupils and staff. As a result, pupils work hard and behave well. You have created a united and supportive staff team and morale is good. Of those who responded to the staff questionnaire, 100% said they were proud to work at St Joseph's. Most parents have positive views. They strongly value the support and nurture their children receive. Typical comments include, 'Nothing is too much trouble' and, 'The enthusiasm, commitment and leadership of the headteacher is reflected in the feel of the school as soon as you walk in.'

Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Effective and imaginative teaching leads to standards which are above the national average at the end of early years and key stage 1 and above average in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2. You have worked hard, however, to improve results in key stage 2 in mathematics and overhauled how this subject is taught. Changes made are taking time to demonstrate impact but there are positive signs in pupils' books that attainment is rising and that pupils are making stronger progress, especially in Years 5 and 6.

You have successfully addressed the key issues raised at the previous inspection. There are greater levels of challenge for pupils of different abilities, including the most able. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth remains above the national average at the end of key stage 1 and has risen in key stage 2.

Teaching is regularly monitored and support is provided to help teachers improve their practice. Staff are held fully to account and you are not afraid to take action where teaching is not good enough. However, there remains work to be done in ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities reach the standard required in phonics by the end of Year 2. In addition, progress in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 is not as strong as it is in other year groups.

Mathematics is one of your key priorities this year and while there is evidence of increased problem-solving and deepening of pupils' learning, pupils' reasoning skills are still at an early stage.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Together with governors and staff, you place the safety and well-being of pupils at the heart of your decision-making. Staff and governors receive regular training. As a result, all adults are suitably knowledgeable about different forms of neglect or abuse and are clear about the steps they should take to report these. Timely referrals are made where you feel that concerns need escalating in order to fully protect pupils. Systematic and well-organised record-keeping of these referrals is in place. A clear chronology of actions taken and final outcomes are fully recorded. Rigorous safer recruitment checks are carried out to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, because guidance related to safety features regularly in assemblies, curriculum topics and through visiting speakers. Pupils say behaviour in school is good and there is no bullying. Pupils feel confident that they can report issues to adults and that their concerns will be listened to. An online safety committee, comprising parents, staff and pupils, monitors the use of technology and ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Parents agree their children feel safe.

Inspection findings

Your evaluations of the school are accurate and honest. Together with governors, you have developed a robust action plan which appropriately targets the key priorities. These are clearly set out and actions evaluated regularly. You are ably supported by a small but effective leadership team. Leaders support colleagues well and have a good understanding of how well pupils in different year groups achieve. Governance is also effective. You have worked closely with governors to improve their skills and governors have invested in their own training to ensure that they carry out their duties to a high standard. Governors are well informed and astute. They have made a conscious effort to increase their presence at school and play an active part in monitoring teaching, for example through learning walks and looking at pupils' books. They have a good understanding of data and are aware that progress in lower key stage 2 is an area for improvement.

You have rightly placed a strong emphasis on improving the teaching of mathematics. To this end, you have chosen to lead this subject yourself. This is because of your own expertise and your accurate recognition that mathematics progress is not keeping pace with English in key stage 2. Consequently, you have revised how mathematics is taught and modelled this for your staff. Teaching now focuses more closely on deepening pupils' knowledge and skills through a mastery approach. You have introduced your ideas gradually and in phases in order to embed practice and ensure success. For example, basic skills were initially focused upon and a new calculations policy introduced. Pupils are now adept and confident in their use of mental mathematics and strong in their number work. Stage 2The second phase was to focus on application of skills, for example problem-solving. Work in pupils' books shows this is a regular feature in lessons. The final stage phase is now focused on pupils' reasoning skills. While this is evolving through improved teacher questioning and feedback, this element is still in the early stages and not yet embedded, so needs further development.

Children make good progress in reading and writing across the school. However, progress in mathematics in key stage 2 is not as strong. Standards were below average in 2016 and 2017. Through the new and progressive way mathematics is taught, pupils are encouraged to select the level of difficulty they wish to work at, under the careful guidance of the teacher. The imaginative use of explorer terminology, 'seekers, voyagers and trail blazers' captures pupils' interest and presents suitable and different levels of challenge to meet the needs of different abilities. Work in pupils' books and school's own assessments of progress demonstrate that outcomes in mathematics are now rising in Years 5 and 6. However, progress in Years 3 and 4 is less secure. Work is not presented well in books and some tasks lack a clear purpose. For example, pupils had to cut up a fraction table and then reassemble and glue it into their books in exactly the same format. This activity took up valuable learning time and 'cutting' became the skill practised, rather than mathematics.

This slows progress down and has a knock-on effect later in key stage 2. There is a strong emphasis on reading across the school, with well-stocked libraries

and a range of books available in classrooms. Outcomes in reading are usually well above the national average at the end of each key stage. This is because pupils are encouraged to read widely and often and are well supported by staff and volunteers in school and parents at home. However, outcomes in phonics were below the national average in 2016 and 2017 and there is a slow trend of decline. You have taken action to address this and the teaching of phonics in Year 1 is now good. Results this year are set to be at least in line with national figures, with most pupils reaching the levels expected. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve less well than others in phonics. This is because they receive a mix of reading material, with decodable and non-decodable words, rather than books which contain only words that can be easily decoded. This confuses them. Individual support is also not focused carefully enough to ensure that they reach the standards required by the end of Year 2. Consequently they are not well prepared for Year 3.

You have worked hard to engage and involve parents more in their children's learning. You seek parents' views each year through your annual survey and analyse and publish these findings on your website. A parent involvement group has been created, which allows you and your governors to share ideas and initiatives and receive feedback from a representative group of parents. You respond to parent requests where possible, for example in changing how parents receive information about their children's progress in the Reception class. This is now done through coffee mornings as opposed to the termly reports which parents of pupils in Years 1 to 6 receive. You have provided training in relation to online safety and the new mathematics approach, so that parents can support their children more effectively. You have an open-door policy for parents to share any concerns and welcome parent volunteers into school. The vast majority of parents have positive views of the school and you are keen to work with the small number who are dissatisfied for any reason.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- appropriate resources and interventions are used to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who do not reach the required level in phonics in Years 1 and 2
- progress of pupils in Years 3 and 4 accelerates in order to further raise outcomes in mathematics and teachers embed the use of reasoning skills to deepen pupils' understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your leadership team and governing body. I discussed the work of the school, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. I observed the teaching of phonics and listened to pupils in key stage 1 read. I also observed mathematics teaching in key stage 2, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their mathematics books. I talked to a wider group of pupils during the day to gather their views about school and determine if they felt safe.

I looked at a range of school documents, including the school's own information about pupils' achievement. I reviewed the school's evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan and a report from the local authority. I took account of the 59 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and comments made on parent text. The school's own survey of parents' views was also considered and additional information collected from parents at the end of the school day. There were 71 responses to the online pupil survey and 12 responses to the staff questionnaire. These views were taken account of.