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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Sarah Ginzler-Maher
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, SWF
Trinity Square
South Woodham Ferrers
Chelmsford
Essex
CM3 5JX

Dear Mrs Ginzler-Maher

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

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Pupils value their time in school. They are consistently well behaved and typically make good use of their time in lessons. They are confident in their work and when speaking to adults. One pupil approached me to ask if I would set her a 'challenge problem' for the week, while others readily came over to greet me. Pupils I spoke with told me that they enjoy school and feel that the work they are set is difficult enough to help them to improve. They also described the environment in the school as one which helps all people feel comfortable and welcome. They said that it is fine to be different. They told me how they learn about different religions, for example, and spoke in a mature way about respecting one another.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. Across the school, you place an emphasis on high-quality teaching meeting the needs of different pupils. This includes ensuring that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are understood and met in the classroom. Leaders have established effective methods for supporting these pupils and share this best practice with teachers and teaching assistants. They check to make sure that their guidance is followed and that it is working. As a consequence, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.

You are rightly proud of your broad and comprehensive curriculum. Pupils learn a range of different subjects, such as science, history and geography. Their work shows that they pursue these areas in depth and develop a secure understanding of different areas of learning. Teachers also take opportunities in other subjects to help pupils with their literacy skills. Pupils' work shows that they develop both subject knowledge, and the ability to communicate this well across the curriculum. Pupils are well prepared to move onto their next steps in education.

All staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they are proud to work at the school. They all, accurately, consider the school to be well led and managed. Governors share this rightly placed confidence in your leadership and recognise the ongoing positive impact that you and other leaders have on raising standards at the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils I spoke with all said that they feel safe in school. If there are any incidents of unkindness pupils confidently know that it will be dealt with effectively. They told me about the regular guidance they receive about staying safe online and all said that there is an adult in school they would talk to if they were worried about something.

You maintain well-organised records of recruitment checks and any concerns relating to pupils' welfare. You take appropriate action to support pupils and monitor their well-being to ensure they are safe. Reports from staff are filed effectively, and external agencies are involved as and when it is appropriate.

Inspection findings

- I was interested to find out how well teachers use their assessment of what pupils know and can do to help them to make good progress. This was an area of improvement from the previous inspection report.
- Teachers now regularly check what pupils understand before moving on. I saw pupils using your chosen system of coloured paddles to identify what they do and do not understand. Pupils I spoke with told me how effectively this works. They explained how adults respond, providing effective support when pupils are not sure about something.
- This is also the case in early years where teachers monitor children's progress regularly and systematically. They use this as the basis for their planning to ensure the needs of all children are well catered for, and that children's learning develops well over time.
- You provide information to teachers on the starting points of pupils who join their classes during the school year. You check teachers' assessments with other schools, including your partner school in the federation. Leaders and teachers have a secure knowledge of what pupils know and understand, and what pupils need to do next. As a result, although there remains some variation in the rates of progress in different classes, progress across the school is typically good and

sometimes better.

- Another aspect I explored related to a fall in the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017. In 2015 and 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving this standard was above the national average, but in 2017 it was below. I wanted to check that pupils are being taught phonics effectively.
- During the inspection, it quickly became clear that phonics is taught effectively. Teachers and other adults work well with pupils to ensure that they make good progress in their phonic understanding. Pupils now in Year 1 have made good progress in phonics and their levels of attainment in 2018 are high. Despite the lower scores in 2017, you were able to demonstrate that pupils from that cohort have also made good progress since the phonics screening check, including in reading.
- Finally, I looked at how well leaders share strong teaching practice across the school. The previous inspection report identified this as a next step in improving the school.
- Teachers typically employ a range of teaching strategies to good effect. Questioning is often of a high standard and is used to make pupils think. Some teachers use leaders' chosen strategies, such as 'talk partners' well to help pupils develop their understanding by sharing their thoughts with a friend. Most lesson time is used well. Some teaching is particularly effective. For example, pupils in Year 5 demonstrate strong mathematical reasoning and high-level English skills. As with the progress pupils make, there is still some variation between classes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they make good use of the existing effective practice to ensure that all classes in the school make consistently strong progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hemmings
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, other leaders and four governors. I visited seven classes, accompanied by leaders, and reviewed pupils' work in their books. I looked at information about pupils' progress and reviewed a range of documentation relating to the school's self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding arrangements.

I considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I met with pupils, individually and in groups, to discuss their views of the school, and listened to pupils read.