

21 September 2018

Miss Louise Buxton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Buxton

### **Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Christchurch**

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are dedicated to improving outcomes for pupils and work effectively with other like-minded leaders to achieve this. In particular, your strong partnership with the deputy headteacher and governors ensures that you remain focused on the right priorities to keep improving the school. You have wisely identified that there is a need to improve the contribution of subject leaders, which you are already addressing. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their monitoring is accurate and closely aligned to the key improvement priorities. This ensures that you are both supported and challenged in equal measure through ongoing and meaningful dialogue.

You ensure that the quality of education is good. This prepares pupils well, especially in their readiness for secondary school. In fact, you and your team have secured particularly strong key stage 2 outcomes for pupils by the time they leave St Joseph's. For example, in 2017, progress measures in mathematics were in the top 5% of schools. Current information suggests that pupils are continuing to make the same strong progress. Your systems and processes in holding teachers to account include challenging progress meetings and checks. These identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind. You take steps to intervene and work closely with others, including parents, to help get pupils back on track. However, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 is variable and is therefore a priority for the school.

Since the previous inspection, you have successfully met the areas identified for development. Teachers maintain effective systems and routines to establish high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. As a result, pupils settle quickly and know what is expected of them. Furthermore, parents are quick to endorse the school. They are effusive in their praise, particularly in how staff establish effective communication and interact positively to ensure that pupils enjoy and achieve well in school.

However, there are some key challenges for you and your team to fully address. As well as raising standards at the end of key stage 1, it is imperative that you improve the teaching of phonics so that pupils gain the knowledge and skills to read with greater fluency and confidence sooner. This is particularly the case for lower-achieving pupils who need to catch up quickly.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and other leaders promote a strong culture for safeguarding pupils. Internal processes, including staff vetting and training, are meticulous. Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They know how to stay safe in a variety of situations and different contexts. For example, they told me how they keep safe online and how to protect themselves from cyber bullying. Pupils know how to respond in the event of a fire and how to evacuate the school should this be needed. Pupils are also proud of the inclusive nature of the school. They are enthusiastic about the school's shared principles that, 'Everyone has the right to learn. Everyone has the right to be respected. Everyone has the right to feel safe'. Parents also share these views with many commenting positively, including that staff 'go the extra mile' to support pupils' emotional, mental as well as physical well-being. This is reflected through the school's personalised approach to working with pupils, including through the inclusion and pastoral team.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and your leaders have rightly identified that phonics is a key area for improvement. This is because outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check and Year 2 retakes are not consistently meeting national benchmarks or have declined. However, despite this recognition, the strategy for teaching phonics is not well enough considered. A lack of clear phonics leadership has led to some inconsistencies in teaching and assessment. Subsequently, pupils' outcomes are variable, especially for those who need to catch up quickly.
- Pupils enjoy learning about phonics and have good attitudes to learning in phonics sessions. However, gaps in teachers' subject knowledge means that pupils do not consistently make strong progress. This becomes evident, for example, when scrutinising assessment records and upon hearing pupils read. Some pupils who already find reading difficult are given phonics books that do not match their phonic knowledge or ability. As a result, pupils sometimes lack fluency and confidence in reading, particularly lower-achieving pupils by the end

of key stage 1.

- Children are well supported to get off to a good start in the Reception Year. Teaching ensures that the children's needs are well met. Effective use of assessment information drives teaching and learning. This ensures that children make good progress, including those who have complex speech and language needs when they arrive at the school.
- The early years provision is well managed and organised to promote high-quality learning across the early years curriculum. Parents recognise this and feel involved, for example by contributing through the school's preferred online assessment package.
- A further line of enquiry focused on key stage 1. You have rightly targeted raising pupils' achievement in key stage 1 as a priority. As a result, teacher assessments in 2018 show consistent improvement in reading, writing and mathematics from the previous years, including the proportion of pupils reaching the national expectations and those exceeding it. However, some pupils are not consistently making accelerated progress from their starting points. This is because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are variable. For example, the same high-quality writing seen in pupils' literacy and religious education books is not consistently reflected in other subjects, notably science.
- In addition, teachers and teaching assistants do not consistently use assessment information most effectively to plan the precise next steps needed for pupils to build quickly on prior knowledge or understanding. This is also reflected in some intervention work. However, new teachers in key stage 1 from September 2018, are feeling well supported and being offered the right training and guidance to respond to these challenges.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve the phonics strategy so that pupils consistently gain fluency and confidence in early reading, especially for lower-achieving pupils who need to catch up
- improve teachers' use of assessment to plan precise next steps in order to raise pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Together with your deputy headteacher, we worked extensively through a range of inspection activities to evaluate the key lines of enquiry. This included listening to pupils read in Year 2 and observing phonics sessions, particularly in key stage 1. I checked the accuracy of teachers' assessments through checking pupils' phonic knowledge directly with them. I also talked with pupils during lessons and around the school. I met with your early years leader to evaluate the use and accuracy of assessment. Additionally, I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I spoke with pupils and staff about their views of safeguarding. I also reviewed evidence of various referrals and communications with external agencies for safeguarding pupils.

I met with the school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the English and mathematics subject leaders. I also met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and a sample of records of governors' visits. I took full account of the 26 responses on Parent View as well as reviewing the free-texts received through the inspection. To supplement this, I met directly with parents at the start of the inspection. Furthermore, I had a discussion with the local authority adviser to confirm the views and support of the local authority.