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9 October 2018

Mrs Lisa Smith  
Principal  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Carterton  
Lawton Avenue  
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Oxfordshire  
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Dear Mrs Smith

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Carterton**

Following my visit to your school on 26 September 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, governors, and representatives from the trust and the diocese. I conducted a learning walk and also met with teachers and pupils. I considered the views of parents and carers by speaking to parents at the start of the day and by reviewing Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of meetings held by governors, school attainment information and various reports from external agencies, including a review of governance and a review of the use of pupil premium funding. The school's statement of action and improvement plans were evaluated.

## **Context**

The headteacher was newly in post at the time of the last inspection. Since that inspection, the school has closed its nursery provision. Leaders have appointed some new staff, including a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and a new early years team. Some governors are also new.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Leaders have addressed the specific safeguarding issues identified in the school at the last inspection. Leaders are determined that the quality of education and leadership in the school will improve. They have emphasised developing further the systems they need to run an effective school, as well as improving leaders' knowledge, skills and understanding of their roles. There are early indications that their ambition is beginning to have a positive effect on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, and that the school is well placed this year to improve further.

At the last inspection, weaknesses in safeguarding practice were identified. Leaders have improved site security, for example ensuring that children in the early years cannot open doors to leave the early years environment. Further fencing to make the whole site even more secure has been ordered. School staff now have a much more vigilant approach to safeguarding, including through their use of risk assessments. They have regular safeguarding training and know the signs they need to be aware of that may indicate a pupil needs extra help. Pupils know that there is an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns. Leaders are aware that they need to update their child protection training and policy in the light of the very recent changes to government legislation. At governance level, much sharper oversight and checking is needed so that those ultimately responsible for pupils' safety can assure themselves that all aspects of pupils' welfare and safety are secure.

Some changes of personnel and structure within the leadership of the Dominic Barberi Multi Academy Company are starting to have a positive impact on the school. For example, school leaders have been provided with some support and training so that they are much more aware of how to fulfil their roles effectively. Middle leaders have an improved understanding of aspects of their roles. The newly appointed school improvement partner is well placed to provide further beneficial training and support for the school.

School governors are keen and enthusiastic. However, they do not all display a thorough understanding of their roles, in part because some are new to governance. Governors have undertaken a useful review of their work, which they have rightly used as a basis for plans to improve the quality of governance. Additional training, for example on how to understand performance information, has been wisely sought. Minutes of governance meetings show that governors are

starting to hold school leaders to account for the quality of pupils' education more thoroughly. However, governors need to improve further this aspect of their role.

Your self-evaluation documentation accurately identifies the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. The current improvement plan aligns closely with the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection and prioritises the right areas that need to be addressed for the school to develop further. You are wisely reformatting these documents to show more clearly the milestones you will be using to measure the school's progress towards becoming a good school, specifically highlighting the intended impact on pupils' outcomes. You recognise the need for leaders at all levels to be even more systematic when evaluating the school. For example, you know that through pulling together in one place the safeguarding aspects already in the plan, leaders and governors will be able to hold the school to account for safeguarding more fully.

Last year, you quickly addressed the safeguarding issues identified in the early years environment. All staff are much more vigilant about safety as a result. You also commissioned an external review of the early years. This identified relevant areas of the provision that needed to be improved, for example providing more frequent opportunities for children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. This September has seen substantial changes made to the early years. You have decided not to offer nursery places this year, and some of the early years staff are new to the school. Consequently, many of the findings of the previous review are now no longer relevant. You recognise this and have already commissioned an additional review of the provision. On our visit, we identified aspects of good practice and some which could be improved. For example, adults are establishing effective assessment procedures so that they know children's different starting points. We discussed the need to now make sure that adults systematically plan for children to make good progress, including by helping children to make the most of the different activities provided.

You have made some very real improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Much of the work you have done has provided a foundation from which the school can build further improvements. You have researched new ways of teaching writing and mathematics, and provided training for staff in these approaches. Your assessment systems at all levels are now much better organised and understood by staff. This means that staff have a more accurate understanding of what pupils can already do, and so plan work which challenges them more effectively.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding has been helpful in identifying where provision for disadvantaged pupils can be better managed. For example, you have highlighted the importance of teaching assistants understanding how best to support the needs of different pupils. The newly appointed SENCo is well placed to ensure that the findings of the review are put in place effectively over the coming year. Her plans to similarly improve provision for pupils who have

special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are already having a positive impact at the start of the school year.

Your new approaches are still in their early stages of effectiveness. However, pleasingly there has been a sharp improvement in the quality of pupils' writing as a result of the increased challenge and more streamlined systems you have put in place. Pupils now write in more detail across the whole curriculum. Their outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have improved so that they are now broadly in line with the national averages.

You know that there is still work to do to improve pupils' outcomes and ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. For example, you recognise that a new system to make sure that pupils are challenged in their learning is not currently being used effectively in all classes. Most importantly, work to improve pupils' progress in mathematics has not proven to be as effective as it should be and, as a result, pupils' outcomes in mathematics still lag behind those of pupils nationally. During my visit, we identified that pupils need more opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills throughout the school. Further training is rightly planned to improve the teaching of mathematics.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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

Catherine Old  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**