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Mrs Bernadette Matthews  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
115 St Mary's Lane  
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Essex  
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Dear Mrs Matthews

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

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 2019, 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 your 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 previous 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.

You lead a school where the Christian faith and its values are central to your ethos. The community is accepting and respecting of everyone and you learn and grow together. Likewise, you celebrate the joy of learning, which is reflected in the inclusive attitudes of staff and pupils. For example, pupils work together in mixed-ability groups, and leaders promote the support that all learners give their peers and the strong relationships that this fosters. Recent academic results overall show that progress in key stage 2 has been significantly above the national average.

Recently, leaders identified that pupils' progress indicated relative underperformance in writing, at greater depth, compared to other subjects. Governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders in improving outcomes for pupils in writing.

Governors also challenge leaders to ensure pupils' well-being and mental health are supported well, for example during external assessment at the end of key stage 2. Governors are well versed in school systems. Through regular visits and the scrutiny of documents and policies, governors know the school very well. They understand

the assessment policy and how that is used to improve outcomes and address misconceptions for pupils.

Pupils have a clear overview of their learning and the next steps in their educational journey. Pupils across key stage 2 told me that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They confidently told me how the school teaches them how to learn. For example, in mathematics they appreciate the opportunities in lessons to reflect on their mathematical reasoning.

Leaders have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Children in the early years are accurately monitored for their academic progress. Leaders track the progress of particular children every week and use this information to set high and appropriate targets. Teachers share children's targets with parents and carers, and next steps are agreed. Teachers meet regularly to discuss children's progress and implement successful interventions across the early years. In mathematics, leaders emphasise the need for articulation and reasoning. Teachers are encouraged and empowered to use their knowledge and skills to broaden classwork and to extend the curriculum beyond the classroom.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders know their pupils well and understand the needs of the local community. All staff are vigilant about the welfare of pupils. Staff maintain accurate records relating to the safeguarding of pupils, and leaders use these to monitor and support pupils and their families.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum contains age-appropriate advice to pupils. For example, on a recent safer internet day, all pupils reflected on which member of staff they would share a concern with. In key stage 2, pupils also considered when they should ask an adult for advice and the appropriateness of sharing images when using the internet and social media. Parents also receive information on keeping their children safe when they use the latest technology. Pupils feel safe at the school. They told me that adults at the school keep them safe and help them if they have an issue.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on two lines of enquiry. The first was based on outcomes in writing for key stage 2 pupils at greater depth. We chose this, because recent progress for this group of pupils was below leaders' expectations and below that found in other core subjects at the school.
- Teachers encourage pupils to write from an early age and the most able children write extended pieces. Pupils' handwriting books show that pupils respond well to feedback and instructions from teachers. Pupils told me that gaining their 'pen licence' was a significant incentive for them to improve their handwriting.

- In lessons, pupils demonstrate their writing skills and develop empathetic thinking, through rewriting passages from their own perspective. Teachers challenge pupils to identify how writers build tension with short sentences in stories. Pupils describe how they incorporate these methods in their own writing. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' writing. Consequently, pupils' writing in books is of a high quality.
- Leaders ensure that a range of strategies are in place to improve pupils' writing. For example, teachers moderate writing at key stage 2 with local schools. Teachers extend the time available for pupils' study of challenging texts, and invite visitors who inspire pupils to write. For example, a journalist recently spoke to pupils and encouraged their extended writing.
- Teachers introduce pupils to a range of texts. This encourages pupils to engage with more sophisticated texts. For example, teachers introduced Year 5 pupils to 'Romeo and Juliet' through dramatic newspaper headlines which captured pupils' attention.
- Leaders have also adjusted staff training to reflect the school's emphasis on effective writing. Literacy specialists have delivered training to staff. Their recommendations on raising standards in vocabulary, oracy and pronunciation have borne fruit. Teachers allow children to find their 'writer's voice' effectively. Teachers use vocabulary consistently that reflects these high expectations. For example, pupils use vocabulary books and other resources, including dictionaries and thesauruses, to record new words. These strategies improve the vocabulary they use in their writing.
- Teachers encourage pupils to edit their own work and their feedback supports pupils with improving their writing. Pupils respond to teachers' feedback and are competent in editing their own work.
- Pupils' work in books shows accelerated progress in their writing, and leaders are monitoring these improvements accurately. Internal data shows that, currently, Year 6 pupils are writing at greater depth. However, pupils' progress in writing at greater depth is not yet in line with other subjects, although the gap is closing. Senior leaders have the highest expectation of their pupils and continue to set challenging targets.
- The second line of enquiry evaluated the curriculum. This was agreed, because you have identified the curriculum as an area for continual improvement.
- The current thematic curriculum gives pupils the core skills that they need for future stages in their education. You have identified gaps where subjects had not been covered sufficiently by the curriculum and have taken appropriate action. For example, middle leaders have implemented a number of supplementary topics, including science week and international week. Pupils now study a range of subjects, including geography and art. Every pupil has the opportunity to cook in food technology.
- Teachers build entry and exit points into curriculum topics that capture pupils' imagination and celebrate pupils' learning. These motivate pupils and engage them in their learning. For example, recently Year 4 pupils visited the National

Maritime Museum in Greenwich for their topic on 'Explorers and Adventurers'. The pupils took part in a workshop about polar explorers and then saw some real artefacts from the museum's archives. Teachers enhanced pupils' literacy skills by enabling them to read original letters, which were challenging to read because of the old-fashioned style of handwriting.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing continues to improve, so that the percentage of pupils who write at greater depth in key stage 2 meets the challenging targets set by leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Hughes  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I held meetings with school leaders, staff and pupils. I looked at a range of pupils' work, together with teachers and middle and senior leaders. I met with governors, including the chair of governors. Leaders accompanied me on visits to lessons, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at their work. I examined a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, including the single central record.

I scrutinised Ofsted's online survey for parents and associated commentary (107 comments), the staff survey (18 responses) and pupil survey (110 responses). I examined the school's website and reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I also considered the school's evaluation of how well it is doing, its improvement priorities and assessment information for current pupils.