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Mrs Moya Smith
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hurst Green
Whalley Road
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Clitheroe
Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Smith

No formal designation inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hurst Green

Following my visit to your school on 19 March 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about outcomes for pupils at the school.

Evidence

I carried out joint learning walks with you, observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at the work in pupils' books. I looked at a range of documents, including those relating to governance, self-evaluation and school-improvement planning.

I also scrutinised the records of checks completed on staff and other documents relating to safeguarding and child-protection arrangements. I met with you, subject leaders, a group of pupils, members of the board of governors and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the Diocese of Salford.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school continues to be outstanding and safeguarding is effective.

Context

St Joseph's RC Primary is a much smaller than average-sized school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language are much lower than average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is also much lower than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average.

Main findings

The inspection took place because published data showed a dip in progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 in 2017. However, there has been a trend in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics being much higher than the national average at the expected standard. Over time, the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in reading and mathematics is consistently much higher than the national average. Similarly, the proportion of those reaching greater depth in writing is usually much higher than the national average. Maintaining high standards of achievement in core subjects is a key priority of staff and governors. Leaders also focus on developing pupils' knowledge and skills in a wider range of subjects and on pupils' personal development.

Pupils read a wide variety of high-quality texts. Similar texts are also read to the pupils regularly by staff. Teachers, teaching assistants and a raft of volunteers listen carefully to pupils when they are reading. Adults encourage accurate pronunciation and check pupils' understanding of what they have read. Pupils are provided with appropriate reading material across the curriculum, which develops and widens their vocabulary. Adults demonstrate strong subject knowledge when reading texts, using excellent questioning to develop pupils' understanding. Teachers provide opportunities that develop pupils' comprehension and inference skills. As a result of these actions, a large proportion of pupils reach the higher standard in reading at the end of each key stage.

The teaching of phonics is also a strength. The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average in recent years. The high-quality teaching of phonics underpins the exceptional progress that pupils make in English by the end of key stage 1.

Leaders ensure that the teaching of writing has a clear sequence. Pupils value this structure and talk about how it helps them to improve. Their use of grammar, punctuation and spelling is particularly effective. Work in their books also shows how teachers encourage them to use ambitious vocabulary to improve their writing compositions. As a result, pupils in key stage 2 write with flair and demonstrate vivid imaginations.

Pupils are given many opportunities to practise their writing. The quality of work in pupils' books shows that they make very strong progress in writing across the curriculum. The quality of handwriting and presentation across the curriculum is always the best it can be. This ensures consistency in the high quality of pupils' work.

In mathematics, learning provides opportunities for pupils to reason about their findings. This promotes their thinking and problem-solving skills. Pupils' learning is enhanced because they understand what they are learning, due to the clear instructions they are given by teachers. Teachers plan lessons which build on pupils' previous learning. Activities develop pupils' calculation and number skills well. Pupils enjoy working through a variety of mathematical problems across the curriculum, for example in science and computing. Pupils are therefore fluent across all strands of mathematics.

Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. Teachers and other adults check and monitor their progress carefully. They plan activities which take account of what the children know and can do. Adults develop children's independence exceptionally well. Children gain confidence from their good relationships with staff and from collaborative play with others. Staff are very well deployed and play an effective role in supporting children's progress. Staff encourage the use of language by modelling key words for children to repeat. Consequently, children are very well prepared for key stage 1.

Across the curriculum, teachers ensure that pupils learn very well from well-sequenced activities across the different subjects. In September 2017, a new topic-based curriculum was launched, covering subjects such as history, geography, science and the arts. When not being directly taught, pupils get on with their work productively and explain things supportively to each other. Scrutiny of their work across many topics shows that their learning over time in a range of subjects is very strong. All pupils sing in the choir and perform in two productions each year. Many pupils also learn to play a range of musical instruments. Teachers use new technologies to enhance pupils' learning.

The virtues of the Jesuit pupil profile and the commitment to 'men and women for others' are the golden thread that binds this loving and harmonious learning community together. Pupils, and all those associated with the school, feel the sense of belonging. This is an exceptionally strong feature of St Joseph's. Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. Their behaviour is exemplary and they socialise well. Older pupils take responsibility for the younger ones. Pupils are highly committed learners and achieve very well. Their very positive attitudes to learning lead to a focused, calm environment, which in turn has a positive impact on their outcomes. Pupils also demonstrate their commitment to helping others, such as the elderly in this rural village, as well as those further afield in Britain and in developing countries.

The small, highly dedicated staff team works very well and has a blend of skills that complement each other. Staff are highly reflective. They analyse their own performance. They constantly strive to improve their practice. Staff ensure that when evaluating their actions, the impact on pupils' outcomes and well-being come first. Teachers and teaching assistants go the extra mile to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Teachers plan pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, so that pupils learn to be tolerant of those whose faith and culture may be different from their own.

Trips and visits to cities such as London, Manchester and Liverpool broaden pupils' horizons. No opportunities for learning are missed. When older pupils engaged in a residential trip to the Lake District, they climbed the highest mountain in England, Scafell Pike. They also rowed the length of England's longest lake, Windermere. Pupils rise to the challenges set by staff, be it academic, physical, personal or moral. The fact that such a small school won seven regional sports tournaments in 2017/18 is a reflection of the 'can do' approach that permeates this school.

The governors are highly committed and know the school well. They hold you and your team firmly to account to ensure that leaders and teachers continue to provide outstanding education for pupils. Governors have a detailed understanding of the school's priorities. They challenge leaders to ensure that pupils get the best possible start in life. Governors contribute to the vision and direction of the school very well indeed.

Governors also ensure that the school meets all its statutory requirements for safeguarding. A strong safeguarding culture runs throughout the school. This includes the robust checking of the suitability of adults to work with children. You ensure that checks on adults before they start to work or volunteer at the school meet statutory requirements. Staff receive relevant training, for example in the 'Prevent' duty. Pupils told me that they feel safe and know how to stay safe. They told me that learning at school helps them to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online. Pupils were able to discuss the dangers of social media.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should continue to embed the new topic-based curriculum so that pupils' work continues to be of a consistently high quality across all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector