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Mrs Sarah Keefe
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Keefe

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 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 the school was judged to be good in May 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, together with the support of other leaders, have created an inclusive learning environment that nurtures both pupils and staff. Pupils enjoy school and are happy. They value the working relationships with staff, which are at the heart of the school's success.

Senior leaders have worked hard to tackle the areas for improvement from the last inspection. You are not complacent and are working to continually improve outcomes for all. Pupils spoke highly of the ways they are able to contribute to the development of the school. For example, the school council asked for better facilities at social time, which resulted in an all-weather sports area being provided. You understand the strengths of the school and have comprehensive plans to improve the areas that need to be better. You realise that initiatives need to be fully embedded, and robustly checked to have maximum impact.

Parents spoken to on the day of the inspection were in praise of the school. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey were extremely positive about the school. As one parent commented, 'St Josephs has gone above and beyond to accommodate my girls and their needs. The teachers and staff are very considerate and work very hard. The school is an asset to our community.'

On the day of the inspection pupils were well behaved and polite. Pupils spoken to

are clear about right and wrong, and that there would be consequences for poor behaviour. Year 6 pupils are trained in peer mediation and effectively support younger pupils in the playground through positive play. Pupils are very aware of issues affecting the planet and have set up a 'Plogolution' club to help improve their local environment. At an assembly celebrating St Joseph's Day, pupils were interested, attentive and confident to share their opinions with others. Pupils are keen to learn. As a result, attendance for the vast majority is well above the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and leaders are committed to providing a safe learning environment for pupils in their care. The relevant checks are made on the suitability of staff to work at the school and two governors are trained in safer recruitment.

Staff receive regular and up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff spoken to are clear about how to report concerns they may have. Designated safeguarding leaders keep appropriate records and liaise effectively with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils are taught about how to keep safe, including online. All pupils who spoke to me said they feel safe in school. If they are worried, they would speak to a member of staff and would be helped. They said bullying is rare, but when it does happen the school deals with it well. They spoke positively about how the school teaches them about kindness and their role in supporting others. The school is acutely aware of the potential risks to pupils outside of school. As a result, older pupils have had talks from the police about knife crime and the dangers of gang culture.

Inspection findings

- The first area of the focus for the inspection was the teaching of phonics. This is because not enough pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2018. The school has a very mobile population, with new pupils, who speak English as an additional language, joining at various phases throughout the school.
- Leaders have supported teachers to deliver phonics more consistently through putting in place a new model where pupils are in smaller groups and set across Year 1 and Year 2. Phonics is generally taught well. Mispronunciations are addressed, incorrect spellings are identified, and pupils' work corrected. Most pupils are using phonics successfully to support the development of their reading and writing. Most of the staff have received appropriate training in teaching phonics. Those pupils who did not achieve the required standard in Year 1 are given further support through bespoke intervention strategies to help them with their phonics.
- Current school data shows that more pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard in phonics at the end of this academic year. Leaders have worked closely with other schools and the local authority to ensure that assessments are accurate. However, you recognise that specialised training of phonics is required,

particularly to teach the most able pupils. This is needed to ensure that they achieve the highest standards in reading and writing.

- The second area of focus was the impact of leaders on the development of writing. Over the last three years, pupils have made less progress in writing than in reading and mathematics. Although progress in writing has improved, writing, particularly at greater depth, remains a key priority for the school.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils have meaningful and consistent writing opportunities across the curriculum. Topics which capture the interest of pupils to write for a real purpose are evident throughout different lessons. Pupils are encouraged to develop their vocabulary, through reading. The introduction of 'shared write' has led to increased enjoyment in writing and pupils said they like the writing being modelled and then they write their own. The quality of handwriting is improving over time. This is because the school has put strategies in place which are effective in building the core strength of pupils.
- The majority of work seen showed strong progress over time, with pupils being confident to edit their writing and improve it. Incorrect spelling and punctuation are routinely corrected by teachers. Senior leaders need to ensure that they check more sharply that the level of challenge in writing is consistently high across key stage 2.
- The third area of focus was the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This is because it continues to be a priority of the school. In the 2018 key stage 2 outcomes, disadvantaged pupils made better progress than non-disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have used additional government funding well to support the individual needs of disadvantaged pupils. Governors ensure that the spending is measurable against pupils' outcomes. Teachers regularly monitor pupils and record assessment information. The school has put a range of effective strategies in place to support the well-being of pupils. This includes the setting up of a well-being room, a breakfast club, therapy groups and 'well-being monitors' to provide leadership opportunities.
- In most classes visited on the day of the inspection, disadvantaged pupils were making the best progress where teachers understood their learning needs and planned bespoke activities to support their learning. However, sometimes the progress of a few disadvantaged pupils is limited because some of their written work is not completed or lacks sufficient depth to extend their understanding. Current school assessment data shows that the gap between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in reading and writing is closing. In addition, both the punctuality and attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the focus on writing at greater depth continues across key stage 2, to enable the most able pupils to make the progress they are capable of
- the staff teaching phonics have the training they need to enable them to do this

effectively.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection began with a discussion of the school's self-evaluation with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Together, we agreed the key lines of enquiry that would be followed during the inspection. I looked at school documentation, including behaviour and exclusion logs and minutes of governing body meetings. I visited lessons, talked to pupils and scrutinised pupils' work with leaders. I met with senior and middle leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead. I met with a group of pupils formally and informally at breaktime. I spoke with representatives from the governing body and the school's improvement adviser. In addition, I met parents and considered responses to the staff survey, and Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.