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Mrs Jacqui Potts
Executive Headteacher
St John Bosco Roman Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Potts

Short inspection of St John Bosco Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 November 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have only been in your post as the school's executive headteacher for a few days, but you have swiftly formed an accurate and incisive view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the finding of the inspection was not surprising to you. The quality of education in the school has declined because teaching, particularly in writing and early years, is not as strong as it has been in the past. At times, teaching assistants in early years do not make a constructive contribution to learning. You have high expectations of the quality of teaching, which are shared by the deputy headteacher. You share an eagerness to put things right in the school. Governors accept that they have taken their eye off the ball but are now keen to support senior leaders to get the school back on track. They ask leaders probing questions and know that standards, particularly in the progress pupils make in writing, have shown a decline over the last two years.

Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection demonstrated excellent manners. They have a high opinion of the school and are typically proud to attend. Pupils have good relationships with most teachers and are confident that their teachers and other adults will help them to learn. Pupils particularly like the wide range of after-school clubs on offer. These include a well-established and nationally accredited gardening club that runs a vibrant and blooming allotment in the school grounds. Additionally, pupils have opportunities to develop their athletic and artistic skills through a range

of other clubs, including for football and art. Pupils spoke fondly of the range of educational visits the school provides that helps them develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. For example, the recent trip by pupils in a year group in key stage 1 to a local mosque developed their understanding of how other religions practise their beliefs. Most pupils said they felt safe in school. However, some pupils, particularly those from younger year groups, said that some older children were, on occasions, mean to them. They explained that this is more common during the long lunch break.

The views of parents and carers are somewhat mixed. Nearly all parents who spoke with me or who answered the online questionnaire, Parent View, praised the school and staff for promoting their children's learning. However, there was a notable proportion of parents who were dissatisfied in the way that leaders had responded when they raised concerns. They felt their views were not always listened to, and that communication from leaders was not good. Some parents value your recent actions to improve communication through your increased visibility around school, particularly at the start and end of the day. However, this is at an early stage and has not yet won over the hearts of all parents.

Leaders have taken actions that have partially resolved the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The first area for improvement related to ensuring that most-able pupils receive appropriate levels of challenge in mathematics. Additional staff training and involvement in development events run by the local cluster of schools have ensured that teachers have better knowledge of effective strategies to promote the mastery of mathematics concepts. Governors' investment in additional resources supports teachers to implement their training more effectively to provide appropriate opportunities for the most able pupils to develop their mathematical knowledge and understanding in greater depth. Work in pupils' books confirms that in most year groups, most-able pupils now are able to apply their better understanding of more complex mathematical concepts to undertake investigations and to solve problems. This is exemplified in Year 4, where most-able pupils demonstrate their secure understanding of shape through a detailed investigation of the perpendicular and parallel lines found in the art work of Mondrian and Kandinsky.

As a result of better teaching, over the last three years pupils have made good progress in mathematics in key stage 2.

The second area for improvement related to improving the quality of guidance pupils receive, so that they know how to improve their writing. It also identified the need to enhance the opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills more widely. Here there has been some success. However, this is not consistent in all year groups and has not been sustained over time. Leaders have introduced a new guidance policy and have promoted the development of vocabulary through additional training for staff. Initially this resulted in an increase in the progress that pupils made from their starting points. However, the impact of these actions on pupils' learning has not been sustained because not all staff adhere to agreed school policies or have sufficiently high expectations of their pupils. As a result, there has been a two-year decline in

the rate of progress that key stage 2 pupils make from their starting points in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are of a high quality and that they are fit for purpose. Staff are trained effectively and have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding, including that relating to online safety. They implement the school's policies relating to safeguarding diligently and are vigilant about the potential risks pupils may face. This is exemplified by senior leaders' well-considered plans to ensure that pupils remained safe while part of the school building was used as a polling station during local elections. Additionally, the vigilance of staff was shown by their swift and appropriate response to a door inadvertently left open.

Appropriate checks ensure the suitability of staff and governors to work with children. Safeguarding records are fit for purpose and meticulously kept by the knowledgeable and proficient school business manager. Leaders effectively share information with parents and appropriate authorities to ensure pupils' safety. Governors ensure that appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection.

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a small number of key lines of enquiry. These lines of enquiry focused on the quality of the teaching in early years and writing. The final line of enquiry examined the design and provision of the curriculum. This line of enquiry arose because of identified shortcomings in the curriculum information published on the school's website at the start of the inspection.
- The first line of enquiry, regarding the quality of teaching in early years, arises because of the consistently below-average proportion of children who attain a good level of development at the end of early years. The majority of children enter early years with levels of development below those that are typical, particularly in the areas of learning relating to communication, language and literacy and those relating to personal development. Most children make good progress in Nursery and most attain a good level of development by the time they leave early years. However, over the last three years, approximately a quarter of the children in each cohort have not attained a good level of development and are consequently not well prepared for key stage 1.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use this knowledge well to ensure that classrooms are well organised and appropriately resourced to be engaging environments in which children can learn and develop. All areas of learning are used to promote the development of children's knowledge and skills in early writing. However, some teachers do not effectively manage the deployment of the high numbers of teaching assistants and adult volunteers to ensure that they are actively involved in promoting children's learning. As a result, the impact of teaching assistants on children's learning is limited and those children who may need additional support to attain a good level of development miss out on the

required help.

- The second line of enquiry focused on the quality of the teaching of writing. This was because, despite the subject being identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, the progress that pupils make from their starting points in writing by the time they leave key stage 2 has declined over the last two years. The results of assessments in 2018 showed that progress in writing in key stage 2 was in the bottom 40% of schools in the country.
- There is considerable variation in the quality of the teaching of writing across the school. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are inconsistent. In some year groups, teachers' excellent subject knowledge is used well to sequence the systematic development of pupils' writing before they are asked to apply it to longer tasks. This was exemplified in lower key stage 2, where carefully planned and sharply focused teaching strongly developed pupils' understanding of the impact of their choice of adverbs on a character's speech. Some teaching makes good use of longer writing tasks in other subjects to provide pupils with opportunities to apply and practise their writing skills. For example, in key stage 1 pupils structure written recounts in response to listening to bible stories in religious education. However, in upper key stage 2, this is not consistently the case. Here, some teachers' lack of subject knowledge means that pupils sometimes do not receive the challenge they deserve to deepen their knowledge and skills of writing. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of and, as a result, they set tasks that are too easy for the most able pupils.
- Teaching in upper key stage 2 does not take account of, or build upon, pupils' existing knowledge to develop their understanding of the components required to complete a written task. For example, pupils were expected to write a balanced argument without sufficiently studying the different ways to compile a written opinion or argument. As a result, pupils did not have the required knowledge to be successful. Work in pupils' books confirms that pupils' knowledge and understanding of the skills of writing are not developed systematically. Pupils are unclear about the structures of different styles of writing. There is some lack of adherence by some teachers and teaching assistants to the school's agreed feedback policy. As a result, pupils are unclear about how to make their work better.
- The final line of enquiry examined the curriculum, particularly in foundation subjects that the school provides. This was because the information about the curriculum that must be published on the school's website was missing. Leaders took immediate and effective action to rectify their failure to provide the requisite information about the school's curriculum on the school's website. Although the requirements of the national curriculum are met, the sequencing of when knowledge is taught is less clear. Leaders are aware of this shortcoming. They are currently working with other schools in their cluster to develop a more refined curriculum model. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this. Work in pupils' French books, particularly in Year 6, is of a high standard and shows that pupils develop their knowledge of a wide range of French vocabulary and are able to use this knowledge to construct basic conversational sentences about a range of

topics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of the teaching of writing is strengthened and better promotes pupils' progress from their starting points, particularly in upper key stage 2, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can do
 - ensuring that the school's feedback and guidance policy is consistently implemented to routinely provide pupils with sufficient information about how to improve their work
 - strengthening teachers' subject knowledge
 - ensuring that teaching routinely and systematically builds pupils' knowledge of the skills required for different types of writing.
- teachers in early years make better use of teaching assistants.
- they further bridge communication gaps with some parents to ensure that they understand that their views are valued, and that their concerns are considered and where appropriate, acted upon.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, and the school's business manager. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with the director of education for the Diocese of Salford. I held a telephone conversation with the local authority officer who works with your school. I spoke with pupils during a formal meeting with representatives from a range of year groups, in lessons and around the school, and listened to readers from key stage 1. I took account of the conversations I had with parents and the information contained within the responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View. There were no responses to the online questionnaires for staff or pupils.

I visited classrooms with you to observe pupils' learning, and looked at their work in

books and on display and records of their learning. I scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and development planning and other policies. I looked at provision for safeguarding and evaluated the impact of the school's policies, procedures and records to keep children safe, including while they are online.