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Mrs Dawn Titus
Headteacher
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
Goodson Road
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Dear Mrs Titus

Subject inspection of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 November 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. The findings do not change the overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding from the last section 5 inspection.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for a no formal designation inspection of schools. The inspection was carried out to enable Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to better understand the quality of education in specific subjects provided by outstanding primary schools.

Main findings

You and your staff have worked hard and effectively to devise a history curriculum which has considerable strengths. Two years ago, you took the decision to teach history and the other foundation subjects discretely. This was because you found that the topic-based approach to learning you previously used did not provide pupils with sufficient subject knowledge. The changes have made a real difference to the quality of pupils' learning in history. They have ensured that pupils develop deep and wide-ranging subject knowledge. The older pupils appreciate these changes. They told me that they now know much more about history and enjoy it far more than they used to.

The subject is well-led by your highly effective subject leader. Staff receive very precise guidance on what pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of each history topic. They are also given clear information about what pupils have previously learned so that they can build on the knowledge already accrued.

Staff regularly remind pupils about their previous learning and test their knowledge through careful questioning and low-stakes quizzes. They have high expectations of what pupils should know and remember. In the lessons I visited, Year 1 pupils remembered when Queen Victoria reigned and could say how long ago she lived. Pupils in Year 4 could recall important information about the Roman Empire even though they have not studied Ancient Rome since Year 3. Pupils in Year 6 have impressive knowledge and understanding of the First World War. They could explain in some depth the causes of the war, conditions on the Western Front and the reasons the war ended in November 1918.

The curriculum places strong emphasis on developing pupils' chronological knowledge. Pupils regularly complete timelines so they can place the period they are studying in their broader historical context. The timeline in the school hall helps pupils to understand the sequence and duration of the different periods of history they have learned about. The curriculum also encourages pupils to respect historical evidence. Older pupils can explain how historians build a picture of the past by looking at and aggregating different types of evidence. They realise it is important to consider a wide range of evidence before drawing conclusions about the past. Leaders introduce concepts such as evidential validity judiciously.

The very clear curriculum plans result in teaching which is focused on clear and valid historical objectives. Staff work well together in their phases to ensure that all pupils experience a history curriculum of the same quality regardless of which class they are in. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils regularly write accurate and detailed historical narratives, for example about Anglo-Saxon life. Their learning is enriched by visits to places such as the British Museum and Windsor Castle. The curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write analytically, however. Leaders now need to develop ways to build further pupils' understanding of history by increasing opportunities for pupils to address historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance.

Evidence

I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the subject leader for history and other teachers. I visited lessons in Years 1, 4 and 6 and spoke to pupils from the Year 4 and Year 6 classes about their work in history. I also looked at a range of pupils' work, including the work produced by the pupils whose lessons I visited. I scrutinised the curriculum plans in history.

Context

The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The school was refurbished following a major fire in September

2015. Pupils and staff returned to the school's permanent buildings in September 2018.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector