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Mrs Sarah Spencer
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Spencer

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Castleford

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 2016, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2011. The visit on 14 June completed the inspection that commenced in February 2016, and which was suspended due to the death of a pupil in tragic circumstances.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following on from a period of turbulence in staffing at all levels, you have engendered a feeling of confidence and enabled the school to renew the rigour and focus on providing a good standard of education. You have evaluated the quality of teaching provided to pupils accurately, through regular observation and monitoring. You have also sought to moderate your judgements through honest conversations and reviews undertaken by other specialists, so that your plan of action focuses precisely on what needs to improve further.

You have begun to develop senior and middle leaders to support the work of the school and actively seek to work with schools in the Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust. As a result, you have planned regular opportunities for leaders to discuss ways to improve learning for pupils in English, mathematics and science. This has helped to secure the accuracy of teacher assessment. The deputy headteacher is contributing towards the good quality of teaching through the coaching and mentoring of newly qualified staff.

St Joseph's is a truly inclusive school and all staff work hard to ensure the progress of vulnerable pupils. Supported by strong leadership from the special educational needs coordinator, the school provides very well for pupils who have special

educational needs or disability. Despite significant needs, over two thirds of these pupils attain levels similar to other pupils nationally and all make expected progress. Although there are gaps in attainment in the early years and key stage 1 between disadvantaged pupils and others, these gaps have been eradicated by the end of key stage 2. With the learning mentor, you have worked systematically to support families and ensure good attendance. As a result of this work, attendance is now in line with national averages.

Members of the academy council are very experienced and highly skilled in their ability to challenge and support you and your deputy. Through very regular visits, they have an in-depth knowledge of the work of the school. Academy council members have steered the school through some difficult times since the previous inspection and their steadfastness has helped to secure current leadership.

The previous inspection identified three areas for improvement. First, to raise attainment by the end of Year 6, particularly in mathematics. Standards in mathematics are now slightly above national averages and pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Second, to improve the consistency of teaching to good or better by providing learning that was better matched to the ability of pupils, and to improve the guidance to pupils so they know how to improve their work. In response, you have ensured considerable focus on ensuring that pupils receive teaching that is matched to their ability. Teachers are successfully planning and delivering lessons with the needs of groups of pupils in mind. However, some boys, particularly the least able, are still not attaining the levels that are expected of them. The third area for development was to ensure the school makes a stronger contribution to community cohesion, by establishing strong links with people from different cultures and religions. This has been achieved.

Information collected through the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, suggests that while most parents are appreciative of most aspects of the school's work, a small minority would like to receive clearer information about how well their child is doing and more timely communications on school events. Parents have been very appreciative of the support from school for pupils and families during a period of grieving.

Safeguarding is effective.

Although some parents expressed concern over bullying, pupils say this is a very happy school. Pupils say that although bullying does sometimes happen, it is quickly dealt with by staff. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

The leadership team makes sure day-to-day safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Rigorous checks are carried out for all staff, governors and volunteers and the single central record is meticulously kept. The records you keep for pupils who need additional support are extensive and demonstrate effective work with other agencies.

Inspection findings

- Standards are broadly in line with national averages at the end of key stage 2. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points, although last year saw a dip in the number of pupils making expected progress in reading. You have maintained a focus on improving reading. Information on current pupils shows they are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Gaps between boys and girls remain in most classes. This is because almost all of the least able boys have been identified as needing support for special educational needs or disability.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils will achieve. Consistency in teachers' planning and a determination to provide practical experiences is enabling pupils to deepen their understanding of new learning. Teachers are reliable in their marking and feedback to pupils; and pupils are beginning to act on their teachers' advice.
- Teaching assistants are very effective in supporting pupils' learning. They work confidently with pupils of all abilities, extending learning through their good subject knowledge and timely questioning. Teaching assistants are having a particularly strong impact on pupils' understanding and application of phonics (the sounds that letters make) resulting in well above average proportions of pupils succeeding in the Year 1 phonics check.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and encourages pupils to learn through creative projects that excite pupils about their learning. Year 6 pupils explain enthusiastically how, in science lessons, they have made 'volcanoes' and rockets to safely investigate chemical reactions. Pupils in Year 5 have explored life in Victorian Britain through a homework project, producing stunning results including a model of Big Ben, a puppet theatre and portraits in the style of the Victorians.
- Staff have helped pupils to understand the wider world through formal links made with pupils in the Gambia and Norway. A recent visit to the Houses of Parliament to observe live debates and meet with the local Member of Parliament raised the importance of decision-making with the school council and eco council. This work is helping prepare pupils effectively for life in modern Britain, as they learn about democracy and respect for others through these links to communities that are different from their own.
- You have worked with staff to efficiently overhaul provision for children in the early years, ensuring that planned activities help children to make rapid progress. Parents consider home-school links with Reception staff to be excellent. The accurate assessment of children's rates of development is helping the teacher to plan activities that really stretch children, helping them with the next steps in their learning. However, gaps still exist between boys and girls, meaning that girls are better prepared to start in Year 1.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strength of the school. Parents appreciate the strong teaching of moral values. Pupils look forward to the many extra-curricular clubs they can attend, including

cookery, chess, fencing, football and 'discovery'. Key stage 2 pupils take part in a residential visit to an outdoor activity centre and through this, experience challenges that develop their strength and resilience. Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes, responding well to the consistent behaviour management used by staff.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- provision in the early years promotes more rapid progress for children, especially boys, to ensure they get off to a good start in Year 1
- leaders monitor the progress of all groups of pupils carefully and ensure well-pitched teaching of boys who are less-able, so they make the same rates of progress as other pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy council, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the City of Wakefield metropolitan district council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one day inspection, spread over two half days, I was able to discuss the work of the school with you and your staff. We visited all classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. I was able to look at pupils' work in books and to speak with pupils throughout the day. Discussions with a representative of the local authority, a representative of the academy trust and three members of the academy council helped to provide additional information. School documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website were also taken into account. I looked at the online questionnaire (Parent View) to gather parents' views about the school and took into account the views of 20 staff and 68 pupils through online questionnaires.