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Mrs Mary Hodges  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brighouse  
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Dear Mrs Hodges

### **Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brighouse**

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 2017, 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 February 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy headteacher lead the school with vision, challenge and enthusiasm. You are passionate about ensuring that the school gives every child the opportunities to achieve and succeed. These aspects of your leadership are infectious and result in a 'can do' spirit across the school from staff, pupils and parents. Parents and carers are very positive about the school, the service it gives them and their children and the way it is run. Many spoke to me about the school's 'family feel' and about the open communications and ready availability of yourself and your team of staff. Pupils spoke with equal enthusiasm about their life at school. They told me that they love their school and feel that staff go out of their way to help them to succeed and be happy.

You lead your staff with energy, care and openness. As a result, staff morale is high. Every member of staff who responded to the Ofsted staff survey that took place during the inspection said that they were proud to be a part of the school. Your inclusive approach to staff well-being, training and continuous improvement means that all staff at the school feel that they play a key role in making the school even better.

You and the governors monitor the work of the school carefully and meticulously. You use the information you gather from this monitoring to focus and refocus the school's actions so that the provision for pupils is continuously improving. You and

your staff know the pupils very well. You have very close and effective contact and engagement with parents. Parents appreciate this. Many parents told me how much they appreciated the efforts to which you and the school go to keep them informed about their children's progress and well-being.

The previous inspection identified the need to develop further pupils' experience of and expertise in writing. In particular, it suggested that the school offer pupils more opportunities to write in a range of ways to suit different purposes and audiences. This was particularly in subjects beyond English. The school has acted effectively to address this in a range of ways over the time since the previous inspection. Most recently, your English leader has worked effectively with all staff to introduce a whole-school approach to writing. This approach seeks to arm pupils with the range of skills they require to write in a range of different ways and formats to suit the needs of both their subject matter and of their audience. You and your staff know that there is still more to be done to improve writing outcomes for all pupils, including the most able pupils and those who are disadvantaged. However, it is clear from the good practice observed during the inspection, and the detailed plans that you have in place, that a more varied and effective approach to writing across the curriculum is developing strongly.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

A culture of safeguarding suffuses the school. You, your staff and governors take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. There is regular and effective training for all staff and governors to ensure that they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding. You and your deputy, as the designated safeguarding leads, have very strong and effective links with outside agencies. Your records of engagement with these agencies are meticulous and show your careful and robust approach to this aspect of the school's work. You make referrals to the local authority promptly and follow them through very effectively.

Pupils feel safe at school and spoke with energy about the range of ways that the school helps them keep safe. They were particularly positive about the input of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and 'Child Line' during assembly time and through careful and interesting follow-up work in class. They spoke with candour and maturity about the risks that the world can pose and the very positive ways that the school helps them to recognise potential danger.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a very high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- I looked at the effectiveness of the early years provision as one of the lines of enquiry for this inspection to see whether children got off to a flying start at your school.
- Children settle quickly into the Nursery and the Reception class. This is because of the sensitive and careful welcome arrangements put in place by the early

years team. As a result of careful conversations, staff know about the range of children's strengths and needs as they enter the school. This means that staff already know a lot about the children before they come to the school. As a result, each child's learning is carefully planned. In addition, the school has developed and maintains a culture of open and honest communication between school and home. Parents welcome this and see it as a real strength of the school. As one parent said to me, 'The staff are brilliant. They are always there. Always available if we want to talk to them.'

- Children in the Nursery and Reception class are happy, safe and soon grow to understand and welcome the routines of sharing, playing and learning established by the school. The environment is interesting and engaging both inside and out. Children play and learn well together, developing their skills as collaborative learners.
- Another area I looked at was the apparently poorer attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities during last year. You and your team have addressed this effectively. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils is now increasingly similar to that of their peers in the school. This growing success is the result of your rigorous recording systems, your staff's extensive knowledge of your school's families and your focus on ensuring that any barriers to learning are, as far as is possible, removed or their negative impact diminished. Your own high expectations of good levels of attendance, as with all aspects of the school, are a key 'driver' of improvement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' success in writing across a wide range of subjects continues to be embedded so that writing outcomes for all pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, continue to show sustained improvement
- prompt and decisive action continues to take place to ensure that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and members of your senior team to discuss the school's effectiveness and what you had done to ensure that the school continues to improve. I also met subject leaders, two governors, including the chair of governors, and with the coordinator of the school's work to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked information about pupils' achievement along with external evaluations of aspects of the school's work and minutes of meetings of the governing body. I considered 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 42 free-text comments from parents and the school's own records of the monitoring of parental views. I also took account of 17 responses to the Ofsted survey of staff at the school. I visited all classes, most of them accompanied by you, to observe teaching, learning and assessment. I checked pupils' progress in their books, talked formally with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and talked informally with pupils in lessons and around the school at lunchtime and playtimes.

I took into account the recent (February 2017) inspection of the Catholic life and the quality of religious education in your school undertaken by the Catholic Diocese of Leeds. This inspection judged these aspects of your school to be outstanding.

I met with groups of parents at the beginning and end of the day.