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22 March 2018

Mrs Isabel Walker
Headteacher
St Joseph and St Theresa Catholic Primary
High Street
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Dear Mrs Walker

No formal designation inspection of St Joseph and St Theresa Catholic Primary

Following my visit to your school on 13 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about outcomes at the school.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector scrutinised the single central record and other evidence relating to safeguarding. I had discussions with you, the subject leaders for English and mathematics mastery, the chair and a representative of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and some parents, as they dropped off children in the morning. I observed lessons in all classes, spoke to pupils and looked at a sample of their work. I considered a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, your data regarding current pupils' progress and subject leaders' records of their monitoring. I scrutinised pupils' books and considered teachers' assessments of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. I looked at a range of school policies, governors' minutes of meetings, records of visits by the local authority's commissioned support, from Entrust, and the school's attendance records.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

the overall effectiveness of the school remains outstanding.

Context

St Joseph and St Theresa Catholic Primary School is an average-sized primary school with 193 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A below-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The level of deprivation among pupils is below the national average and 9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals compared with 24% nationally. Just over 9% of pupils have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and of these, a small proportion has an education, health and care plan. The school has experienced some staffing fluctuation from September 2015 to July 2017. The headteacher in post at the time of the previous inspection in March 2009 retired in July 2017 and you took over the post in September 2017. You had previously been deputy headteacher at the school. Leaders and governors have high expectations when recruiting new staff. Nevertheless, school leaders do not experience difficulties in recruiting staff.

Content

Since your appointment in September 2017, you have successfully built on the substantial strengths previously established within the school. In addition, you speedily introduced a fresh outlook, which required all staff to adopt and accept higher expectations and greater levels of challenge. Governors confirmed that you never take your eye off the ball in making sure ongoing improvements are fully implemented, meticulously checked and never relaxed. You have quickly created a strong team of staff who are resolute in providing rich learning opportunities and high levels of support for each pupil.

In 2016, published school data indicated that the rate of pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 was well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, these pupils attained standards significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. They went on to maintain standards above national comparisons at the end of Year 6 in reading and writing but their results in mathematics dipped below national figures. In 2017, pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 improved to average or above in writing and mathematics but remained well below national comparisons in reading. These pupils had also attained above-average standards at the end of key stage 1 in all subjects. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, although small in number, attaining the expected and higher standards in all subjects was above other pupils nationally.

As deputy headteacher in 2016, you took immediate action to analyse the root causes of below-average progress rates in key stage 2. You identified that pupils were not developing a deep, long-term understanding of mathematics which they could then adapt for a range of mathematical purposes. You sought the necessary expertise, provided training and quickly introduced clear, non-negotiable strategies for all staff to implement in their mathematics lessons. You insisted that staff share with pupils the focus of learning in any lesson. You made sure that all adults were

familiar with the appropriate mathematical vocabulary and modelled the relevant words in all of their explanations. Pupils were expected to adopt the terms when answering questions or explaining their ideas to demonstrate their understanding. You ensured that tasks were systematically developed in each lesson so that learned skills or knowledge could be further practised and pupils' understanding deepened. Teachers quickly grew in confidence and speedily developed greater accuracy in their assessments of pupils, particularly during individual lessons. By the end of key stage 2 in 2017, pupils' rates of progress in mathematics were above the national average and in the highest 20% nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected and higher standards was also above the national average.

Current records of pupils' progress in mathematics provides strong evidence of accelerated rates of progress in all classes. Teachers have developed a secure knowledge of age-related standards and their expectations of pupils are based on accurate assessments. As a result, teachers plan daily lessons which ensure that pupils gain the right breadth of knowledge, depth of understanding and application of skills. Teachers accurately take account of individual pupils' success or difficulty in any lesson and ensure they receive appropriate levels of challenge or support the following day. As a consequence, ability groups are fluid and change according to pupils' level of confidence in any given mathematical topic.

In lessons, pupils persevere, precisely adopt mathematical terms to explain their chosen methods and demonstrate a clear enthusiasm for their work. As one Year 2 pupil explained, 'It's really hard and I enjoy doing hard work!' Pupils choose further tasks according to their self-confidence in the topic but they do not defer to easy options. They are proud of their mathematical thinking and they are accurate in their self-assessment. Two pupils in Year 3 confirmed, 'Maths is my favourite subject' and 'Maths is great – it helps you get a good job.'

You carefully assessed why pupils made less than the national average progress in writing in 2016. You observed teaching, scrutinised pupils' written work and checked teachers' assessments of pupils. You introduced new daily routines so that specific skills were taught and then systematically applied in a range of appropriate subjects. You arranged support for the English subject leader to enhance his leadership across the school. You insisted that pupils were taught how to form their handwriting consistently, neatly and legibly and then apply the skills to all written work. Pupils' current work in books provides ample evidence of the success of this focus. Their work in all subjects is presented to a very high standard. You and the English leader introduced new expectations of key stage 2 staff to methodically teach spelling rules and consistently expect to see them applied to pupils' written work in all subjects. Pupils of all ages take care to spell correctly or at least apply their knowledge of phonics to provide plausible attempts. Pupils write for a range of appropriate purposes and are able to adopt different styles of writing and methods of presentation. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected standard or that of greater depth in writing was above the national average for all groups of pupils. Most of the current Year 6 pupils are making at least good progress in writing and have made substantial gains since the beginning of the

school year.

The rates of pupils' progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 remained below the national figures in 2017. However, the proportion attaining the expected standard was in line with the national average and those attaining the higher standard were above similar pupils nationally. In September 2017, you increased the number of reading sessions in each class to raise the profile of reading skills. You also introduced 'drop everything and read' (DEAR) sessions after lunch to provide greater opportunities for pupils to read. In addition, adults read to groups of pupils to share the excitement, expression and humour in books. This routine has successfully inspired those pupils who did not willingly engage in reading and they are now eager to read their favourite books. You provided training so that staff knew the essential reading skills such as inference, comprehension and fact-finding. The English leader also raised staff's awareness of the higher standards to be achieved within the age-related expectations. Your monitoring records show that pupils now read widely with levels of accuracy and understanding appropriate for their age. Pupils' progress is tracked meticulously and your records demonstrate that all pupils are currently making at least good progress. You have exciting plans to improve the library and reading resources in the near future. Reading remains a priority for ongoing improvement.

Subject leaders regularly complete monitoring tasks to check on the quality and accuracy of teaching as well as the rates of pupils' progress. They conduct examinations of pupils' work, observe lessons with no prior notice and have developed detailed tools to provide well-informed feedback to teachers. They check that improvement points are speedily implemented and provide support where necessary.

External support

You have established excellent professional relationships within the local cluster of schools. You readily seize advice and expertise wherever it can be found. The local authority's brokered support service, Entrust, has provided effective support and training in response to the dip in pupils' progress in 2016. In addition, Entrust representatives monitor how well new strategies are implemented. Feedback is suitably specific so that leaders are aware of ongoing priorities. Recent monitoring identified substantial improvements in all aspects of the school's work.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further consolidate and embed recent initiatives in reading and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector