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Mrs Nicola McVeigh  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mrs McVeigh

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

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2018, 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 September 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. However, when you started leading the school in 2014, the school was not in a strong position. Standards were declining and the local authority had concerns about the quality of education provided.

Your strong, determined and decisive leadership has improved the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Staff are proud to work with you and value the positive improvements you have made to the school. You have high expectations of staff but also have due regard for their well-being and their workload. Your work, and that of your team, is recognised and valued by the local authority. Consequently, you and your subject leaders are asked to share your work and support other schools.

At the time of the last inspection, pupils' behaviour was recognised as a strength of the school. You have maintained this strength. Pupils behave well in lessons, at lunchtimes and around the school. Pupils told me they enjoy school, value the help that teachers give them and particularly like mathematics lessons.

You provide pupils with a broad, balanced and rich curriculum. During this inspection, for example, older pupils were making ice cream and investigating how the properties of ingredients change, painting their Roman mosaic tiles and using atlases to satisfy their curiosity and deepen their knowledge about the composition of the British Isles. Pupils make strong gains in their vocabulary because the curriculum is interesting and well taught.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that subject leaders have a greater impact on teaching and learning. You have enabled this to happen. You have set clear, high expectations for subject leaders. They now have a thorough understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. They provide effective training and development for staff and know what could be even better. For example, the history, geography and science leaders have analysed very closely the knowledge, skills and understanding that the oldest pupils have not developed well enough in the past. They have clear plans to redesign the curriculum to tackle these shortcomings, and ensure that pupils make even better progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have created a culture that ensures that staff listen to and watch pupils carefully. Staff record their concerns regarding pupils' well-being swiftly and diligently. Leaders communicate effectively with parents and carers, and with other professionals such as social workers. Leaders know and understand the checks they have to undertake to ensure that adults who work with pupils are suitably vetted. As a result, the single central record of these checks meets requirements.

St Joseph's is a happy and inclusive school. Almost half the pupils speak English as an additional language. All pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Some pupils say that others sometimes say unkind things about the colour of their skin. Leaders act with great haste and decisiveness when recording and dealing with the rare incidents of racist language.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I evaluated the progress children make in the early years; the impact of leaders' actions to improve pupils' phonetic understanding; the progress that key stage 2 pupils who speak English as an additional language are making in reading and writing; and the impact subject leaders are having on pupils' outcomes.
- Children in the early years make good progress. Those who start school with knowledge and understanding below those one would typically find make very good progress. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1. Leaders have increased the amount of time that children work directly with adults, to ensure that spoken language is being consistently well modelled. Adults are effective in their questioning of children. They always ensure that children have to think carefully and constantly use the language they are learning. Leaders have made positive improvements to the outdoor learning environment. As a result, the curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting both inside and out.
- Leaders have had a significant impact on improving pupils' phonetic knowledge. In 2015, not enough pupils met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Leaders retrained staff to ensure that all adults were teaching phonics in a consistent way. Staff now use detailed assessment information well to ensure that planned learning builds on what pupils already do and do not

understand. Early reading books are well matched to pupils' understanding of the sounds that letters represent. As a result, achievement has risen considerably and almost all pupils reach the expected standard. Year 1 pupils use and apply their phonetic knowledge well in their writing. Pupils make good progress.

- Key stage 2 pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in reading and writing. Pupils who are newly arrived in the country make striking progress. Teachers have high expectations and pupils rise to these. In writing, pupils make strong improvements in their spelling, punctuation and use of grammar. A rich and well-balanced curriculum ensures that bilingual learners develop a good vocabulary range quickly.
- The English leader has changed the whole-school approach to teaching reading. Staff are now placing even greater focus on ensuring that older pupils can infer meaning in what they read. As a result, standards are continuing to rise. Year 6 librarians are proud of their well-resourced library that they help to maintain. They recognise the quality of the texts they can access and the difference this makes to their own writing. Pupils give the library '10 out of 10'.
- Subject leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils make good progress in history, geography and science, for example. Subject leaders are held to account effectively by governors. Subject leaders are ambitious, and they want to ensure that pupils make even more progress. They have undertaken an exemplary audit of what the oldest pupils know and understand. They recognise that changes in subject content over time and less strong teaching may have led to gaps in pupils' subject knowledge in science, history and geography. Leaders are currently redesigning the curriculum to ensure that these gaps close and that teachers are even clearer about what great progression in their subjects will look like.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new curriculum plans are implemented effectively, so that pupils make even better progress in science, history and geography.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied leaders to all classes and we undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I spoke to pupils at lunchtime and reviewed 49 questionnaire returns from pupils. I met subject leaders, spoke to staff around the school and reviewed 25 staff questionnaires. I scrutinised 46 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text comments. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and received written correspondence. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.