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Miss McHale
Headteacher
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Joseph Street
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Dear Miss McHale

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

Following my visit to the school with Lesley Allwood, Ofsted Inspector, on 2 May 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 2013.

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 the senior team lead the school with a clear moral purpose. You are determined that every child in your care must and will do well. You work imaginatively and carefully to make this happen. You are very clear that it is only through the shared efforts of an expert, highly motivated and constantly improving team of staff that all pupils will achieve their very best.

You have, rightly, identified reading as a key area that needs further development. You are clear that pupils need to combine growing confidence and skill in the 'mechanics' of reading with joy and a genuine engagement with language and the power of words. You are also clear about the vital roles that parents, carers and families have in working with you to develop their children's reading. Supported by Leeds City College, you have run family learning sessions for parents. These combined university-led workshops are followed by parent and child sessions. The aim of these sessions is to help parents gain practical insights into how best to support their children in their reading and other learning. The parents I spoke with who had attended these sessions told me that they were delighted with them. They said that they had given them confidence and really helped them to support their children.

Leaders have been meticulous in devising their plans to improve reading across the school. You are developing the skills of all staff, including teaching assistants, as teachers of reading through carefully targeted training. You have then systematically monitored the effect of this training on pupils' success through

regular pupil progress meetings and follow-up support for staff. These pupil progress meetings, in which you discuss the progress of individual and groups of pupils, are regularly attended by members of the governing body. You are clear that there is still some way to go before all staff have the insights and skills to actively support the development of reading. However, inspection evidence shows that all staff share your vision and are enthusiastically improving their skills.

Phonics is generally well taught and pupils enjoy learning to read. Early years staff combine this with a rich diet of talk and experiences for children that help them develop and expand their vocabulary and control of, and pleasure in, language. Children like to talk and they learn through this, taking pleasure in playing with language. Staff record progress carefully and use the information they gather to inform children's next steps. The early years team engages closely with parents to keep them informed about their children's progress, including in reading. The parents I spoke with said that they welcome this. Reception children are now, overall, well placed to get off to a flying start in Year 1. In key stage 1, phonics continues to be taught effectively. However, it is not sufficiently clear how the reading scheme books link to pupils' developing skills. As a result, opportunities to reinforce learning may be lost.

Pupils read and enjoy a wide range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry, as they move up the school. Pupils told me that they have noticed a significant increase in the amount of time they now spend reading and discussing books and texts. They welcome this. They told me that reading is the key to learning. Pupils have a growing experience of a range of genres and of how writers use language to create mood, tone and emotion. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are developing a wide range of comprehension and other skills, such as inference, through their reading. This is having a positive effect on their own writing. Pupils are increasingly seeing the links between the range of devices that the writers of the books and texts they read deploy and their own skills as writers. Teachers are increasingly skilled at helping pupils to make these links.

Staff morale is high. You know your staff well and you support and challenge them with quiet insistence. You have rigorous, yet humane, systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching at the school. These have helped you and your senior team identify where additional support and training are needed to further improve provision. While the performance management of teachers is well established, similar support for teaching assistants has been only recently introduced. It is too early to judge its effect on further improving the quality of the support that these valuable staff provide. Evidence from this inspection shows that teaching assistants are very keen to extend and deepen their skills. They are committed to the school and want the very best for all pupils. Evidence also shows, however, that there is some variability in teaching assistants' expectations of what pupils should and must achieve.

The school's previous inspection report, in September 2013, identified the need to improve attendance across the school. You have successfully addressed this. Overall attendance is now slightly above the national average and has been so for some

time. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also slightly above the national average. You are aware that there is still more to be done to support those pupils, and families who, from time to time, find regular attendance challenging. You and your staff are determined in your use of a wide range of imaginative strategies, including home visits, to remove the barriers to regular attendance of this very small group of pupils.

Governors are ambitious for the school and know it well. They are very clear about its strengths and about what they need to do to ensure that it continues to improve. Governors extend their individual and collective skills through regular training. This is carefully linked to the needs and priorities of the school. Governors are effectively supported by the local authority and the family of Catholic Compass schools. Governors pay regular and structured visits to the school to gain direct insights into its progress. They attend pupil progress meetings, regularly meet with staff and talk with pupils. As a result, they have a very good understanding of the school. They hold leaders to account with rigour and attention to detail.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are of high quality and are meticulously kept.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding at the school. All adults at the school, including governors, take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Your designated safeguarding leaders ensure that regular and effective training is provided for all staff and governors. Because of this, all adults are up to date in their understanding and knowledge. You are very well supported by Leeds local authority in maintaining a highly reliable safeguarding culture. Officers from the authority undertake regular and rigorous audits of the school's safeguarding arrangements. You and your team have very strong links with outside agencies. The records of the school's dealings with these agencies are detailed. They show your meticulous and passionate approach to this very important aspect of the school's service to the community. You engage with the local authority promptly and follow up safeguarding issues tenaciously.

Inspection findings

- Children enter the school with language skills and experience that are less developed than those normally expected for their age. You and your early years staff tackle this effectively. The school provides children with a language-rich environment where they are encouraged to talk, as they explore a wide range of interesting activities. Early reading and writing are effectively taught. There is good provision for children that moves them on quickly from their different starting points. Good relationships between children and adults are very quickly established. Parents are fully involved. As a result of these strengths and the effective training you have put in place for staff, children's speech and language skills develop well. Early years staff monitor each child's progress and well-being carefully. They use the information they gather to target their teaching so that

children make strong progress.

- The progress of pupils, especially of those at risk of falling behind in their reading, is carefully and regularly monitored. Prompt and measured action is taken to get pupils back on track. Similarly, staff are effective in addressing misconceptions in mathematics and science. For example, I saw a teacher in a science lesson use deft questioning and pupils' prior knowledge to develop and deepen their knowledge and understanding of human bone structures. She dealt with misunderstandings and misconceptions with kindly firmness. She was able to do this because, like all of your teachers, she knows her pupils well and has strong subject knowledge.
- Pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, have many opportunities to write at length in English and other subjects across the curriculum, such as religious education. Writing at length gives pupils opportunities to develop their skills and deepen their understanding. Pupils take care with their presentation, and their work is, generally, well presented.
- The leadership of the support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is effective. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with staff and parents in the identification, support and monitoring of the well-being and progress of these pupils. Through regular training and information sessions, she helps staff to develop and target their teaching. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Out-of-class interventions are generally carefully focused and designed to ensure that pupils spend as much time as possible in mainstream lessons. However, some of these sessions are not as effective as they could be because they lack pace and do not focus precisely on pupils' needs. The SENCo works very effectively and robustly with outside agencies. She ensures that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and their parents get the service and support that they need from support services beyond the school.
- Pupils told me that they really enjoy coming to school. They said that they feel part of a large and happy family. Your pupils are keenly aware of the diversity of the school and the community it serves. They relish this. They spoke with animation about how much they learn from each other. They said that staff treat them with care, shaping their teaching and support to their needs and aspirations. They appreciate the efforts that staff make to keep them safe, happy and learning. Pupils described what the school has done to help them know how to keep themselves and others safe in a range of situations, including when online. They talked about acts of worship and visiting speakers, as well as lessons, as times when they discuss and explore how to keep safe, confident and secure.
- Pupils want to do well. They like learning and talking about their work. They are proud of what they do and the way the school cares for and challenges them. Their behaviour in class is very good because they know the routines, show concern for others and want to learn. They are proud of their school. There is no litter on site. Pupils told me that bullying is very rare and that if it does occur it is dealt with promptly and effectively by staff.

- I spoke with a wide range of parents across the day. All of them told me that this is a good school. The online parent surveys I have taken into account support this view. Parents said that they welcome the range of ways that the school uses to keep in touch with them. They mentioned your visibility and presence as positive aspects of the school. I spoke with a range of pupils and parents about their experience of reading at school and at home. It is clear that there is wide variability in how much support pupils receive in reading at home.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue:

- to strengthen and improve pupils' love of and expertise in reading by further developing all staff as highly skilled teachers of reading and strengthening the links between speaking, reading and writing
- to develop the training opportunities and skills of teaching assistants so they are better able to play an active and informed role in supporting individual and groups of pupils in their learning and success.

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 Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited all classes during this short inspection. You accompanied me in all of these visits. During the visits, I observed learning and, where appropriate, I spoke with pupils about their work and attitudes to school. I looked at a wide range of their books and folders to judge their progress and the quality of their presentation.

During the day, I spoke with you, the acting deputy headteacher, the SENCo, the teachers who lead on reading and safeguarding and two governors, one of whom is the vice chair. I also met with an officer from Leeds local authority who has been monitoring the work of the school. I observed and spoke informally with pupils during the day and at break and lunchtime. I also spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and again when they arrived in the afternoon to take them home. I met more formally with a group of Year 5 pupils to discuss their attitudes to learning and their views of the school. I also listened to, and discussed, reading with four Year 3 pupils. The acting deputy headteacher joined us for this meeting. I also met with a group of parents who had been part of the school's

family learning programme.

I took into account nine text messages from parents and the views of the 10 parents who responded to Ofsted's online facility, Parent View. I also took into account 11 results from staff to an online survey. I read a wide range of documents about the school's safeguarding systems, the quality and effect of staff training, governors' work and the minutes of their actions and the quality and effect of teaching.