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10 September 2018

Mrs Irene Williams
Headteacher
St Joseph's RC Primary School
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Dear Mrs Williams

Short inspection of St Joseph's RC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 July 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You became headteacher in 2016. Since that time, you have been determined to maintain and improve the quality of education your pupils receive. You ensure that they have a well-maintained and welcoming environment. You give pupils a sense of pride by displaying around school the best examples of their work from a wide range of subjects.

You and your staff care well for your pupils. For example, you give a high profile to their mental health. You have set up a dedicated display board, which reminds pupils about how to be aware of and better understand their emotions. You also encourage pupils to think about others' feelings. You have founded these messages firmly on the school's Roman Catholic ethos by connecting them to Christian values, such as kindness. You have also timetabled a trained teaching assistant to be available at least once each week to meet pupils' mental health needs. These actions contribute effectively to pupils' well-being and to their confidence that adults will help them, if they have any concerns.

You have been mostly successful in addressing the areas for improvement that inspectors identified at the last inspection. Evidence from observations of teaching showed that pupils now listen very well in class. This contributes effectively to the picture of typically above-average attainment in reading and writing across the

school. Although attainment in mathematics is close to the national average by the end of Year 6, it is not currently as strong as that in reading and writing.

You have also ensured that teachers adopt strong practices in teaching and learning across the school. For example, staff have opportunities to see effective practice in other schools, which they then adapt and apply to their own teaching. A new tracking system ensures that staff have a clearer view of the skills pupils need to develop in each subject. You have also introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics, so that teachers now have a sharper focus on developing pupils' skills in problem-solving and reasoning.

Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics have received the training they need to enable them to check accurately the standards in their subject. They now carry out a range of activities to this end, such as visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. They give feedback to staff about areas for development and identify gaps in pupils' skills. They then devise appropriate action plans for improvement. However, they are not consistently clear in explaining and evaluating the intended impact of their actions on pupils' achievement.

You are clear about the school's priorities. You have useful plans for school improvement in place. These identify appropriate objectives and actions and you have identified who is responsible and what resources are required. The plans are less precise, however, in conveying how you will measure the impact on pupils' outcomes.

You support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils enjoy a range of clubs, such as art, dance and various sports clubs. They benefit from visits to the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, for instance, and residential trips to take part in adventurous activities. You also ensure that you promote fundamental British values, including tolerance and respect for others' faiths and cultures. You provide a range of activities and lessons in subjects such as religious education and personal, social and health education to develop pupils' understanding.

Staff are very positive about their work in the school. They appreciate the training that leaders provide and say it makes them better practitioners.

The local authority and the diocese have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. Between them, they have provided various forms of effective support, such as an experienced headteacher to act as your mentor when you first came into your current post. As you have gained experience, they have gradually reduced their support, in keeping with their increasing confidence in your leadership skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and your electronic records are detailed and of high quality. As designated

safeguarding lead, you make prompt referrals to external agencies, such as children's services, as necessary. The school's record of required checks on members of staff complies with the government's guidance.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Your staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. The warm and trusting relationships between staff and pupils enable adults to be alert to any concerns. Pupils feel safe in the school because adults teach them important lessons, such as not to give personal details to anyone when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the day, I shared with you a number of key lines of enquiry, which formed the basis for the inspection. I have already written about how effectively you have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. I have also reported on the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned the progress of pupils currently in key stage 2 who are disadvantaged. You make effective use of pupil premium funding to provide pupils with, for example, individual tuition and extra sessions in small groups to support the development of their skills in English and mathematics. As a result, this current group of pupils makes strong progress. These pupils acquire the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills well. In mathematics in Year 6, for example, they successfully tackle complex problems involving multiplication.
- My next key line of enquiry related to how well leaders ensure that most-able pupils, currently in key stage 1, make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for these pupils to deepen their learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers ask pupils questions that challenge their reasoning skills, such as those that require them to predict mathematical solutions if aspects of a problem are changed. In writing, pupils show more sophistication in their style and sentence structure than other pupils. By Year 2 in reading, most-able pupils show good development of higher-order skills, such as inference. The number of pupils who attain greater depth in writing by the end of Year 2 has improved recently. However, the proportion of pupils who reach that standard in reading, writing and mathematics is still not high enough.
- Another focus was on the progress that children make in the early years. After your arrival as headteacher, you made effective use of expertise from other schools where practice in the early years is strong. You now make sure that staff analyse the gaps in children's skills more accurately. This enables them to plan well-organised learning opportunities for children. For instance, children enjoyed a game with numbered skittles, which combined the development of their physical and mathematical skills to good effect. Because of leaders' actions, there was substantial improvement in 2017 in the number of children who achieved a good level of development. In 2018, leaders have ensured that the proportion of children continues to be close to the national average. Since children enter the early years with knowledge and skills below those that are typical for their age,

this represents strong progress.

- Finally, leaders understand their statutory responsibilities well. Governors have a secure knowledge of the school and support and challenge you and your senior leaders effectively. They have a clear overview of safeguarding in the school. However, owing to some technical issues, the school's website is not currently compliant. This is because leaders have been unable to upload some information about the governors and about the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders and governors have undertaken to rectify matters as soon as possible.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue with their strategies to increase the number of pupils who achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1
- they develop the school's new approach to teaching mathematics, so that even more pupils attain the expected standard or better by the end of Year 6
- they ensure that action plans for improvement make clear the intended impact of leaders' actions on pupils' achievement and how that impact will be precisely evaluated
- they make sure that the school's website is compliant and remains so.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

With you, I carried out short visits to the early years and all year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with you, other members of staff, governors and pupils. I had discussions with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated 52 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. There were no other survey responses.