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22 November 2018

Miss Clare Gardner  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Pudsey  
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Pudsey  
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Dear Miss Gardner

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

Following my visit to the school on 13 November 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 December 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The transition between headteachers has been seamless. You quickly gained the trust and confidence of staff, parents and carers following your appointment in 2016. One parent told me, 'Miss Gardner always puts others before herself.' You are highly valued by the trust board and in September they moved you into another one of their schools for half of your time.

Following the last inspection, middle leaders seized the challenge set by inspectors to monitor the impact of leaders' actions. Your middle leaders are a vibrant and enthusiastic team who can show clear evidence of the difference they are making. They are loyal to the school and rightly proud of their work. You have empowered middle leaders by involving them more fully in data analysis and pupil progress meetings. This means middle leaders can see where pupils are struggling and give teachers further training in those areas. You have given middle leaders the opportunity to report the impact of this work directly to governors.

Leaders and governors have identified the right priorities for improvement. Governors told me that as the multi-academy trust has evolved, the relationship between the trust board and the local governor council has strengthened. This has resulted in sharper and more coherent challenge. Leaders and governors are fully aware of the areas where there is still work to be done. For example, there is a dip between great results in the Year 1 phonics screening check and pupils' outcomes in the Year 2 reading test. You know that in your school's context, pupils' attainment at key stage 1 is not yet good enough.

We worked together during the inspection to evaluate the progress key stage 1 pupils are making now. We found evidence of good progress, and we agreed that those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are doing particularly well. For example, in one lesson, in a mixed Year1/2 class, pupils with SEND were using a shoelace to thread different objects in sequence. This practical activity was very well matched to their ability. A skilful teaching assistant used questioning effectively to develop pupils' mathematical vocabulary as the pupils worked independently.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that the work set in mathematics was hard enough for the most able pupils. Leaders have been very successful in tackling this. In May 2018, 37% of your Year 6 pupils achieved the higher standard in mathematics, against a national average of 24%. We observed lessons together and looked in pupils' mathematics books to evaluate the level of challenge in all year groups currently. We saw strong evidence of good pupil progress against a high level of challenge. Mathematics books include many examples of pupils using and applying their skills to problem solving.

The behaviour and conduct of pupils is excellent and the Catholic ethos is palpable. The high-quality artwork in corridors includes the pupils' own depictions of Bible stories. Pupils are proud of their school and they feel happy and safe. Parents value the care provided for pupils with SEND. One parent told me, 'This brilliant school puts the children right at the heart of everything they do.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding systems are fit for purpose. Staff at all levels know how to raise child protection concerns with designated safeguarding leaders. Leaders give vulnerable pupils the extra help they need, keeping very detailed and thorough records. You document the school's prompt actions when concerns are raised, and the responses from partner agencies are noted with dates and times. You liaise with the local authority designated officer when necessary.

Parents are very positive about the robust medical care plans in place, and there is frequent communication between home and school. For example, I saw a teaching assistant listening to a parent before school, and the parent told me how reassuring it is to have this opportunity. Pupils told me about lessons they have received about staying safe online, including guidance on sending personal images and gaming. A parent raised concerns about images circulating on WhatsApp, and the school's response was swift and effective. Pupils were able to explain what they had learned from this.

## Inspection findings

- Throughout the school, pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning, so lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils' attainment in key stage 1 has not been good enough in recent years but Year 2 results were much better in 2018. We worked together to check that this improvement is securely embedded.
- We saw high-quality work in pupils' books, with most pupils taking pride in their handwriting and presentation. We saw frequent opportunities for sustained independent writing in key stage 1. Middle- and higher-attaining Year 2 pupils are able to use punctuation, including some pupils using the possessive apostrophe correctly. Pupils read with confidence and fluency. Phonics teaching is a strength of the school. The impact of this is evident in the school's consistently high phonics results.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers skilfully use a wide range of mathematics resources to help secure less able key stage 1 pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teaching assistants' subject knowledge is good. Teachers use other adults effectively in lessons and this helps less able pupils make even better progress. Teaching assistants encourage pupils to work independently and this builds pupils' confidence. As a result of effective teaching and high-quality support, pupils with SEND are catching up quickly.
- We evaluated provision for the most able mathematicians at key stage 2. We agreed that there is a high proportion of very skilful teaching, and effective questioning, in upper key stage 2. There is strong evidence in pupils' books of frequent opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to reasoning and problem solving. Your most skilful teachers have built pupils' fluency and confidence, using high challenge and effective assessment for learning.
- Key stage 2 pupils understand a wide range of recording methods, including bar modelling and formal written methods. Pupils have a secure understanding of place value. Teachers encourage pupils to be agile mathematicians, and pupils are confident in choosing the most efficient methods to solve problems. In one lower-ability mathematics set, a less able Year 6 pupil was able to explain the learning in that lesson. Examples were given by the pupil based on a secure understanding of fractions, and correct use of the terms 'numerator' and 'denominator'. Expectations of less able learners, and the level of challenge, are suitably high.
- Lower key stage 2 pupils told me that their parents help them to learn their times tables through homework. Many pupils have a secure grasp of times tables and this helps them work more quickly to solve problems with accuracy. For example, one pupil was able to explain how a problem had been solved using knowledge of times tables, factors and multiples to quickly complete calculations mentally, and then use secure knowledge of the inverse to check the answer. However, at times, the level of challenge is not high enough to match the ability of the most able pupils. Some teachers' use of assessment for learning and focused questioning is not yet sharp enough.
- Middle leaders know that there is further work to be done to ensure that all teaching matches the standard of the best practice within the school. They were

able to share examples of work they have already done with individual teachers, and to show evidence of the difference this has made in improving teachers' subject knowledge. In other cases, middle leaders have taken action to improve the quality of teaching across the school. For example, middle leaders for mathematics recently introduced a calculation policy that all teachers are now following, and this has resulted in greater consistency in teaching methods. Leaders analyse pupils' test papers to see if there are common areas where pupils were less successful, and they lead staff meetings to improve teaching in those areas. The impact of this is evident in pupils' higher tests scores.

- Middle leaders have correctly identified the areas for improvement in their subject areas. They share your ambition for the school's continuous improvement. Middle leaders are outward facing and they enjoy the training opportunities and moderation events that they attend through the local authority, the multi-academy trust and the teaching school hubs. This training helps them to keep up to date with developments in their subject areas, and quality assures aspects of their work.
- Your evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is accurate. You inspire your team. It is important that the increased momentum of improvement in your own school does not falter when you are away working as an executive headteacher at another school within the multi-academy trust. The less experienced senior and middle leaders who are covering your absence need ongoing support and training.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers sharpen their use of assessment for learning, and use questioning more effectively, to improve the rate of middle- and higher-attaining pupils' progress in lessons
- the multi-academy trust offers sufficient training and support to the interim leadership team when you are deployed into an executive role elsewhere.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the 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

Tracey Ralph  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, you and I observed lessons together in key stages 1 and 2. Pupils' work from across the school was scrutinised alongside middle leaders. Meetings were held with you, the head of school, subject leaders, the chair of the multi-academy trust, the chair and vice chair of the local academy council, the office manager and lunchtime staff. Various documents were evaluated, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's monitoring records. I met with pupils in lessons and in the dining room. I also listened to several pupils read. Safeguarding documents were reviewed, including some individual case files. The responses to Ofsted's questionnaires from 18 staff and 42 pupils were considered. The 62 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were also taken into account, along with comments made personally to me by several parents bringing their children to school at the start of the day.