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Mr John Devlin
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Devlin

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 2019, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2016.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your vision to ensure that all pupils have access to a wide range of enhancing experiences permeates the school. Pupils, staff and parents told me that provision of residential trips and a wide range of enrichment experiences is a main strength of the school. Year 6 pupils talked excitedly about their up-and-coming trip to Amsterdam and visit to Anne Frank's secret annex.

Most staff feel well supported. Your priority has been to ensure high-quality training for staff. Staff are particularly positive about the effect of this training in helping them to improve their teaching practice and ensure a more consistent experience for pupils.

The majority of pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards their learning. There have been no pupils excluded from the school for a number of years. The vast majority of staff and parents who made their views known during the inspection agree that pupils behave well. However, a few staff who responded to the staff survey do not feel that there is a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour.

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, and those who talked to me during the inspection, hold positive views about the school. In particular, parents value the support provided for pupils. Pupils told

me that there is a trusted adult in school who they can speak to if they have any worries or concerns. Staff expressed that there is a 'family feel' in the school. Staff know the pupils and their families well. You place high importance on raising the profile of mental health and well-being across the school. For instance, some pupils in Year 5 are being trained as mental health champions. Pupils are encouraged to express their feelings and emotions.

Outcomes for pupils in key stage 1 and 2 have improved since the school became an academy. For instance, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined improved in 2018 to above the national average. However, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher standards, although improving, remained below average. Therefore, you have made this a main priority. Pupils who are at risk of underachieving are quickly identified so that appropriate support is put in place to help them to catch up quickly.

Leaders, governors and the trust know the school's strengths. However, they are not complacent. They are committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve. They understand the areas for further improvement. Governors provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. For example, governors have challenged leaders to improve the quality of phonics teaching.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff understand the vital role they play in keeping pupils safe. One member of staff told me that, 'It is everyone's job to safeguard pupils – we all have to be vigilant.' You ensure that staff receive regular training and updates so that they are fully aware of the potential dangers pupils may face, particularly the risks in the locality.

The designated senior leader for safeguarding works closely with the catholic care social worker to ensure that support is given to pupils and their families when required. There are close links with outside agencies.

The pupils that I spoke to told me that they feel safe in school. Pupils understand the dangers that they may face online and also learn about staying safe outside school. For instance, Year 6 pupils spoke to me about the talks they receive from the police on subjects such as knife crime.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I wanted to find out how effectively leaders are improving the quality of phonics teaching. Historically, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been below the national average. Improving the teaching of phonics has been a main priority for the school. You have ensured that both teachers and teaching assistants follow a similar structure for each phonics session. In the past there have been a number of different phonics schemes in use and so teaching of phonics has lacked some

consistency in the past. This is no longer the case, as all teachers and teaching assistants now follow the same phonics scheme. High-quality training has been central to improving the quality of phonics teaching. Pupils participate confidently in phonics sessions.

- Pupils in key stage 1 show a keen interest in their reading. There are reading corners in every classroom and pupils told me that they enjoy teachers reading stories to them. The school's own television studio is used to record teachers reading stories so that pupils and parents can listen to these stories at home. There are more children on track to meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check this year. However, the books given to pupils to practise their reading are not always well-matched to their developing phonics knowledge.
- There is a growing culture of reading across the school. The pupils I spoke to told me that they read regularly and they enjoy reading. When necessary, additional support is provided for pupils to improve their comprehension and inference skills. Teachers consider carefully the books for whole-class study. These books are often linked to the main topic of study and are used as a stimulus for pupils' writing effectively.
- In 2018, the progress made by Year 6 disadvantaged pupils in reading was disappointing. Although disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, their progress still lags behind that of their peers. The school's plan for pupil premium funding is not clear about the specific barriers that disadvantaged pupils face. There is no precise measure to judge the effect of leaders' actions to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress, particularly in reading. This makes it difficult to evaluate the plan accurately.
- During the inspection I wanted to check the school's approach to writing, particularly for boys. You have rightly prioritised improving boys' writing. Leaders have introduced clear and fixed ground rules for improving writing. This is helping to ensure a more consistent approach to the teaching of writing across year groups. Pupils are given greater opportunities to edit and improve their work in response to the feedback they receive. Opportunities to write at greater length, and for different purposes, are evident in subjects such as science and history. However, the framing of writing activities sometimes restricts the amount or depth of writing for the most able pupils. That said, more Year 6 boys are on track to meet and exceed expected standards in writing this year compared to last year.
- Leaders are keen to develop the curriculum further to ensure that pupils develop their subject-specific vocabulary, and so that pupils can see the links between subjects. During the inspection, you discussed your aim to provide wider opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their understanding of the origin and history of words.
- Pupils' attendance dipped slightly last year. However, this year pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school is below the national average. Leaders ensure that the importance of good attendance is made high profile across the school. They regularly analyse pupils' attendance information to spot any trends and

provide support for pupils when required.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are continued efforts to further develop pupils' written skills and subject-specific vocabulary across the curriculum, so that more pupils, particularly boys, achieve greater depth in their learning
- the school's plan to support disadvantaged pupils identifies their barriers to learning and includes measurable targets against which to evaluate the effect of actions on pupils' progress
- the books pupils use to practise their reading are better matched to their phonics ability.

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

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I made visits to most classes with you. I also looked at the work in pupils' books with the English and the mathematics subject leaders. I met with you and the head of school, a number of staff, two trustees and four governors, including the chair of the governing body.

I took account of 19 responses from parents to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, and 27 responses from the staff survey. I talked informally to pupils in lessons. I met formally with a group of pupils from Years 3, 4 and 6. I spoke to some parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day. I listened to some pupils from Years 1 and 2 read and discussed their reading with them.

I examined a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, governors' minutes, attendance and behaviour logs and safeguarding records.