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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Wendy D'Arcy
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Font Street
Nympsfield
Stonehouse
Gloucestershire
GL10 3TY

Dear Mrs D'Arcy

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 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 March 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 work effectively with other leaders, staff and governors to ensure that pupils attend well and enjoy their learning. You have successfully implemented a range of activities to check the quality of teaching and learning. You use the information these glean to be robust in holding teachers to account for what their pupils achieve. This information also helps you accurately identify the next steps for school improvement. As a result, the school continues to flourish. This is recognised by the vast majority of pupils and parents. A typical view of parents who responded to Parent View included, 'St Joseph's is a fantastic school and my children are thriving here, both personally and academically.'

You instil high expectations of the pupils. These are reinforced across the school day and seen in pupils' exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning. Teachers ensure that lessons are purposeful and interesting. They set work that is matched well to pupils' individual needs, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, pupils make strong progress throughout their time in the school and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

You have successfully tackled the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. These were focused on raising pupils' achievement in reading. Since then, the school's outcomes have been consistently high. For example, in 2017, pupils' progress in key stage 2 was in the top 6% of schools nationally. Further results have been published in 2018 to show that pupils' achievement in reading continues

to be strong.

You are not complacent and rightly recognise that there are a few remaining priorities to address. In particular, pupils' achievement in mathematics is variable, especially for lower- and middle-achieving pupils, who are not consistently making accelerated progress to reach the standards of which they are capable. In addition, there is more work to do to ensure that all leaders, especially governors, are most effective. For example, governors ask a range of pertinent questions and undertake visits to meet with leaders. However, governors' work lacks precision and rigour in following up issues. This limits the overall success of their work in holding leaders to account for reaching the very highest standards in all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other leaders ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are fit for purpose, including vetting and recruiting new staff. Staff are well trained and fully aware of how to escalate concerns about pupils' welfare. You take prompt and effective action to refer pupils to a range of external agencies. This ensures that pupils and their families get the timely help they need to resolve difficulties that they may be experiencing at home.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They are fully aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils told me that they trust staff. They have confidence in adults to resolve problems, including minor disputes should these occur. Pupils show a strong understanding of how to stay safe in different situations, especially given the school's unique situation with a public accessway on its grounds. Pupils know what they must do mitigate any risks caused by this. They also know how to evacuate the school quickly and safely, including when the need arises during an out-of-hours disco.

Inspection findings

- We agreed the key lines of enquiry at the start of the inspection. The first focused on pupils' achievement in mathematics. This is because pupils' progress in mathematics is disproportionately lower than in English, especially reading.
- Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. Teachers plan lessons corresponding with age-appropriate content and give pupils opportunities to justify their thinking and reasoning. You have introduced daily arithmetic sessions and 'LEAPS' for all pupils to improve their knowledge and fluency of the four operations.
- However, on some occasions, teachers do not check pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding closely enough. As a result, teachers then move pupils on too quickly before they have fully secured prerequisite skills and knowledge. This means that pupils are not always ready for the next challenges being presented to them and this slows the progress of some pupils.
- The teaching of reading is highly effective throughout the school. Teachers have the highest expectations of pupils, starting from the earliest opportunities. For example, in the Reception class children were enjoying a shared book and

successfully considering alternative words for 'fragile'.

- The teaching of phonics is well planned and organised to get pupils off to a flying start. The daily programme to teach letters and sounds is highly effective. This also identifies pupils at risk of falling behind and ensures that you can put in place timely and effective interventions for them to catch up.
- Teachers devise well-tailored reading tasks to meet the full range of pupils' needs. Teachers check pupils' understanding, especially their comprehension and reasoning, to plan the right next steps so that pupils make rapid progress. High-quality texts are shared commonly with pupils, who apply their love of reading in countless ways across the school day. The reading strategy is robust and highly effective so that pupils' outcomes are consistently high.
- Finally, I evaluated the effectiveness of the school's new 'REACH' curriculum. Leaders have worked closely with a range of stakeholders, including the pupils, to evaluate and redefine the school's curricular aims and objectives. Pupils are inspired by the full range of experiences and activities on offer, which, for example, result in the high-quality art work seen throughout the school. Pupils recognise the value of the links between subjects, which helps them to form a broad body of inter-related knowledge in support of their wider learning and development. Pupils are effectively transferring knowledge and skills to a range of alternative subjects and situations. This is enabling them to test ideas and refine their skills in different ways.
- Leaders' expectations of age-appropriate challenge and progression across subjects are implemented effectively. Work scrutiny and analysis of theme books in Years 1, 3 and 6 confirm that there is a tangible progression of skills and content, as well as tasks being adapted to meet different ability needs. The curriculum continues to be evaluated and designed based on the pupils' needs. This is contributing to pupils being well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- raise achievement further in mathematics, by ensuring teachers rigorously check pupils' are secure in their mathematical understanding
- further develop the challenge of the governing body so that the school can reach the very highest standards across all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the inspection. I worked extensively with you and the assistant headteacher, including sampling a range of pupils' work and talking with pupils through inspection activities. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I spoke to pupils and staff about their views of safeguarding. I evaluated evidence that shows how you work with other agencies to keep children safe. I met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary, improvement plans and records of governors' visits. I took full account of the 108 responses on Parent View as well as the free-texts received through the inspection. I also met with some parents at the start of the inspection and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I also met with other leaders in the school, including the mathematics subject leader and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).