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Mrs Jude Ryan
Headteacher
St Joseph the Worker Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Ryan

Short inspection of St Joseph the Worker Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2017, 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Staff, pupils and parents are full of praise for the leadership you have shown since starting in post as headteacher in 2014. Together with your new deputy headteacher and the governing body, you show a strong determination that pupils should receive the best education the school can provide.

You have effectively tackled some of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The standard of presentation of pupils' work is good in all classes and your middle leaders take an active role in helping the school to improve. The impact of your work to drive improvement is seen in the increased number of children in the early years achieving a good level of development. There is a three-year upward trend of pupils reaching the required standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 and evidence of rising standards by the end of Year 2.

Your own evaluation of the school's performance is accurate. It correctly identifies the areas the school needs to improve. In particular, you and your staff recognise that progress in mathematics needs to be stronger and that the gap in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others must be further reduced.

Your teaching team is strong. Teachers are well supported by teaching assistants who work in partnership alongside them. Pupils describe how helpful their teachers are because they provide them with guidance and support. You have developed a

rich curriculum that is exciting for pupils. It is effective in raising pupils' aspirations. Pupils described with pleasure the extra clubs and activities they enjoy. They spoke enthusiastically about the annual Shakespeare event, as well as numerous sporting activities, film and computer clubs. The curriculum supports their good achievement in writing, art and music.

I was impressed by the consistently good behaviour I saw in the school. In every class we visited, almost all pupils showed a very positive attitude to learning. Pupils' good manners were evident in their courteous greetings.

Parents told me that they have full confidence in the school to ensure that their children achieve well. They appreciate your quick response to any concerns they raise. Parents said that they know their children are well prepared for the next stage of education because of the success of their older children now at secondary schools.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors share a commitment to keeping pupils safe. Your arrangements for safeguarding are meticulous and highly effective. You work successfully with other agencies to minimise the possibility of harm to any pupils. Staff told me that they receive regular and high-quality safeguarding training to keep them well informed. They felt that they knew how to act in a range of different circumstances. You carefully evaluate the risks involved when pupils take part in different activities. You are assiduous in ensuring that staff recruitment is conducted safely.

Pupils are very confident that they are well looked after and can share any worries they might have with an adult. They describe their school as a happy and safe place. Pupils were able to tell me confidently that they understood how to keep themselves safe in different situations. I was especially impressed by their awareness of the dangers to avoid when using the internet and social media. Your pupils have benefited from becoming digital leaders and further increasing their understanding of how best to use the internet.

A member of the governing body has very relevant professional expertise in safeguarding and is, therefore, well qualified to oversee the school's systems. Leaders and governors ensure that arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality.

Inspection findings

- You have quickly identified that attendance for some pupils is not regular enough. You are tackling this through working with parents and motivating pupils to attend regularly and on time. The enhanced role of one of your learning mentors to specifically work with parents to improve attendance is proving to be effective. You take a firm stance with parents when pupils are persistently absent and develop action plans for pupils with a record of low attendance.

- Pupils told me that they enjoy the many rewards you offer for those who have particularly good attendance. You give attendance rates a high profile in school and report to parents in the weekly newsletter. Your efforts to improve attendance in this academic year have been hampered by a serious outbreak of illness in the autumn term. Nevertheless, learning mentors can show evidence of a changing culture and much better attendance for some pupils with previously low attendance.
- You are determined to raise standards in reading so that all pupils learn to read well. You have changed your focus to especially promote enjoyment in reading. You make sure that pupils read often and hear adults reading well almost every day. Classrooms and corridors are filled with enticing displays of books. The new 'reading corners' in every classroom are imaginatively presented, for example the brightly painted 'reading shed' and attractive wigwams and tents. Older pupils give up their time to be 'reading buddies' with younger pupils three lunchtimes each week.
- Parents and pupils say that they enjoy the books sent home for families to read together. Pupils love dressing up as favourite characters and the occasional visits of authors. You are aiming to gain recognition of the school's good progress in improving standards in reading by working towards local awards. Despite these efforts, standards remain just below average and a few pupils are still reluctant readers.
- Pupils are becoming more confident in developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics. They enjoy the many strategies to help them visualise problems and abstract concepts. You have rightly identified that progress needs to be accelerated further and have rigorously analysed why standards fell last year.
- You have changed the way mathematics is taught in Year 6 and ensured that there is a high level of challenge for all pupils, whatever their starting points. Your tracking information, as well as the work in pupils' books, shows good progress this year, with standards rapidly rising.
- You and your staff are working effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You have made the progress of these pupils a key element in your staff appraisal system. Good use is made of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. However, you and your governors have recognised that the school can learn from others, and so have sensibly commissioned a review of how the funding is spent, to make sure that it is narrowing the gap effectively between the achievement of these pupils and others nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to improve pupils' progress in mathematics by enhancing their ability in mental mathematics and problem-solving

- the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During my visit, I met with you and your deputy headteacher and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with several members of staff, including your two learning mentors and the coordinator for mathematics. I spoke to a member of your local authority school improvement team who has visited the school on several occasions. I met with a group of parents at the start of the school day and also looked at the survey results from Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, as well as the school's recent survey of over 90 parents. Together, you and I visited all the key stage 2 classes to look at learning in mathematics. I also looked closely at pupils' workbooks in mathematics across the school. I met with a group of pupils to hear their views. I listened to several pupils of different abilities reading and talked to them about their enjoyment of and their progress in reading. I reviewed your current assessment system and data, tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation and school development priorities. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements and your work to ensure the regular attendance of your pupils.