

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Patricia Chantrey  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Crossfield Street  
Deptford  
London  
SE8 3PH

Dear Mrs Chantrey

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

Following my visit to the school on 14 December 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 November 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. High proportions of pupils attain the expected standards in reading, writing and in mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6; disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress and achieve as well as their peers. This prepares pupils well for their next stage of education.

You, the school's senior team and staff have worked successfully to embed high standards of behaviour and a culture of care, where every pupil feels valued and nurtured. You have also promoted strongly the school's values of respect and tolerance. Pupils live the values of the school in showing care and respect for each other. Pupils are extremely polite and courteous. Pupils speak very warmly about the school and the way in which teachers help and guide them. In speaking with a group of pupils, and asking what they would like to change in the school, many indicated that they are perfectly happy with the school the way it is. They take great pride in the school and appreciate what it has to offer.

Along with senior leaders and governors, you ensure that the school's accurate and detailed self-evaluation and improvement plans are implemented and monitored well. This helps everyone understand the school's priorities, and makes sure that the impact of actions are evaluated successfully. Governors are very involved in the life of the school. They fulfil their responsibilities well. Senior and middle leaders are growing in confidence and experience. They increasingly take the initiative in suggesting and

implementing improvements.

The previous inspection report identified points for improvement that included the need to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics and to improve the performance of boys. The actions taken by the school in these respects have been successful. In this inspection, we agreed to focus on writing and on the performance of the most able pupils, which pre-inspection data showed to have been weaker than other aspects in 2017. This, and continuing development of the broader curriculum, remain as areas for the school to address.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are thorough. The leadership team has made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A good recruitment process makes sure that new staff and volunteers working at the school are vetted rigorously. Governors and the headteacher regularly check the school's safeguarding records, which are detailed and of high quality. Good risk assessments are undertaken for visits out of the school, and regular evacuation and lockdown procedures are practised. Pupils' safety is paramount. All staff have had appropriate and recent training. They take safeguarding seriously, are vigilant, and know what to do if they have concerns. Such concerns are reported swiftly, and referred to external agencies as appropriate.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of e-safety. This has grown from good teaching and the regular reminders they are given to make sure that they are very aware of the need to be careful online. Pupils say there is no bullying but that, if it did occur, it would be dealt with very swiftly. All this contributes to an effective culture of safeguarding where pupils are safe and staff are vigilant.

### **Inspection findings**

- As the first focus for the inspection, we agreed to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' actions in ensuring that pupils, particularly the most able, make good progress in writing through key stage 2. While national assessments in 2017 indicated that, overall, pupils' progress in writing through key stage 2 was good, a lower proportion of pupils attained the greater depth standard in writing at the end of the key stage than was the case in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders have put effective systems in place to improve pupils' writing. Time is provided each week for pupils to write extended stories and reports. As well as in literacy sessions, good opportunities are created for pupils to apply the techniques and ideas they learn in English in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. They apply their skills in spelling and grammar to their writing in these subjects and pay very close attention to handwriting and the presentation of their work. This is giving greater purpose to their writing and pupils are responding well.
- Pupils carefully plan their writing and build on their ideas through the week by writing drafts, editing and redrafting their work. Teachers give feedback on how they can improve their work, and time is given for pupils to respond to the suggestions made, and to make appropriate changes. However, guidance from teachers sometimes relates to improving punctuation and grammar rather than to the content of their

writing or the way they express their ideas. Where this is the case, the second drafts are accurate and read well but do not show improved quality and depth.

- We also agreed to explore how effectively leaders are ensuring that the most able pupils are making good progress and achieving well in key stage 1. Although the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is above average in the national end-of-key-stage-1 assessments, the proportion exceeding the expected standards is low.
- Pupils in key stage 1 develop a good and accurate knowledge of phonics and apply this well to their reading. They read accurately and are developing an interest in reading for enjoyment. Pupils write accurately and respond well to the writing challenges presented to them. Most punctuate their work well and some are beginning to write interesting stories and recount events with accuracy. They are developing a good handwriting style, which they are beginning to apply with increasing consistency across their work. In mathematics, pupils are, step by step, recognising number patterns and calculating their answers to number problems using a combination of addition, subtraction and multiplication facts.
- The pace of learning in lessons is steady, with an emphasis on making sure that all pupils have a secure baseline of knowledge. This supports lower-attaining pupils well, but does not provide consistently high levels of challenge to the most able, who are often presented with work that they can already do, with extra challenge being provided only when the core work has been completed. A lack of challenge is also seen in teachers' questioning of pupils, which at times insufficiently probes their ideas or pushes them to extend their thinking and understanding. In speaking with pupils in key stage 1, several expressed a view that work was not always sufficiently challenging for them, with mathematics offered as an example. Their work showed that few pupils in key stage 1 are using reasoning or applying their knowledge in solving more complex mathematical challenges, such as recognising patterns and making predictions.
- Finally, we agreed to focus on how well pupils are developing a breadth of knowledge and deeper understanding across all subjects to ensure that they achieve well. Information on the curriculum is provided through the school's website but some of this information lacks clarity, with some contradictions. It provides limited information on how the school ensures good progress in learning across subjects.
- Pupils receive a broad and interesting curriculum with specialist teaching in music, Italian and in physical education. Displays of pupils' work around the school show a breadth of themes covering history, science and religious education. Pupils learn about British values as they reflect on their own lives in Britain. They understand about democracy and the values of equality and tolerance in personal, social and health education lessons. A broad range of artwork produced by pupils and displayed around the school shows good progress in the development of techniques in drawing, painting and collage.
- In humanities and science there are significant differences in the scope and quality of pupils' work between classes. As already noted, there is a strong and successful focus on the development of writing. However, this is sometimes at the expense of developing subject-specific skills. For example, in history, pupils' writing about characteristics of Roman life, and in science, about life cycles, showed good

understanding of content. However, there were fewer examples of skills development such as analysing an increasing range of historical sources or developing scientific investigation skills. In particular, there was little evidence of increasing levels of challenge for more able pupils in how to develop their investigations, hypothesise or record and summaries what they have found. Good assessment systems have been introduced in art and computing to carefully track the progress pupils are making over time both in the content and skills of the subject. These good systems have yet to be extended into some other subjects of the wider curriculum.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils in key stage 1 are consistently challenged with work that builds upon their prior knowledge and understanding
- pupils in key stage 2, particularly the most able, receive guidance that helps improve the quality and depth of their writing
- pupils make good progress across all subjects of the wider curriculum, with an appropriate balance between the learning of knowledge and skills to enable them to achieve well in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Wagstaff  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I had discussions with you, senior leaders, and governors about the school and actions taken to improve the school. I spoke with a representative of the local authority and of the diocese. Middle leaders were interviewed about their role in developing their subjects. 'Learning walks' took place with members of the senior leadership team in key stage 1 and 2 during the inspection. Samples of pupils' work were reviewed with members of the senior leadership team and I spoke with a group of pupils. I analysed a range of school documents linked to the school's self-evaluation and improvement priorities. I spoke with a parent who requested a meeting and looked at the seven responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also looked at the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 60 responses to the pupil questionnaire.