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Mrs Sarah Pollard  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy  
Philip Avenue  
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Lincolnshire  
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Dear Mrs Pollard

### **Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 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 June 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your ambitions for the pupils are high and underpin the way you lead and manage school improvement. Your staff, the governors and the academy trust share your aspirations for the school and its community, and support school developments with tenacity. The school's strong Christian values put children at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils feel safe, happy and valued at school, and so grow and flourish in their personal and academic development. Parents and carers speak highly of the school's pastoral care that enables their children to grow and flourish. The school's harmonious cultural and social mix gives pupils a very good understanding of how to treat others with kindness and respect, and teaches them that everyone should be valued equally. Your staff know well the challenging circumstances some pupils face in their lives and that only the best is good enough for the children in their care. Every child really does matter in your school and this spurs everyone on to do their best at all times.

You have high expectations of all staff. They know and understand their responsibilities and are quick to respond to any support and guidance they receive to improve their performance. They have access to any relevant training to improve their knowledge, skills and practice. Staff are very proud to work at the school and particularly appreciate that leaders support their well-being and personal development as well as their professional expertise. Despite a dip in the outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2016, particularly in reading and mathematics, there was rapid improvement in 2017. There is strong evidence that current pupils are making good progress throughout the school and

are on track to achieve even more this summer in the national tests. An increasing number of pupils at both key stages are working at greater depth. Pupils enjoy learning and want to achieve well because they know school is important. You and your senior leaders monitor teaching and learning very closely. Everyone knows the school's strengths and weaknesses, and subject leaders take effective action to improve provision in their areas of responsibility. The procedures to assess pupils' progress and achievements are accurate and reliable, and successfully inform teachers' planning. Frequent meetings to discuss pupils' progress enable staff to identify quickly any pupils at risk of falling behind their targets, and to plan further support to help them stay on track to make the progress they should. Most pupils are challenged well but expectations could be raised further at key stage 2, especially in reading and mathematics.

The actions taken to improve provision for reading and mathematics are effective. Following the disappointing outcomes in 2016, the increased focus on developing pupils' mental arithmetic skills and logical application of previous learning has had significant impact on accelerating pupils' progress. More pupils are now working at a greater depth of learning, especially in their mental agility in arithmetic and their reasoning skills to solve multi-step problems. While the teaching of reading is good and pupils enjoy reading, a few explained that they would like to read more to others at school because they do not always have the opportunity at home. At both key stages, pupils consistently achieve well in their writing because they write extensively in English and in other subjects to practise their skills. For example, pupils explore 'raiders and invaders' and Ancient Egypt to deepen their knowledge and understanding of how these civilisations affected society. The teaching of basic literacy skills is good and pupils have a secure grounding at the end of Year 2. Older pupils at key stage 2, who possibly do not have this secure foundation, occasionally make errors in their grammar, punctuation and spelling. This is addressed effectively by making sure that pupils check their work carefully.

Governors are regular visitors in school and know its strengths and weaknesses well. They understand the challenges that some pupils and their families face in their lives, and serve the school community effectively. They question information they receive from the headteacher about pupils' progress and challenge leaders if pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Governors have the skills and expertise to support developments and they ensure that funds are maximised to accelerate the progress of all pupils.

Children start in the Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age. An increasing number are disadvantaged, have special educational needs and/or disabilities or are from families where English is not the home language. Also, a significant number join the school late in key stage 2, often with many interruptions in their learning. You accommodate these needs very effectively and pupils make good progress. The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard when they move into Year 1 is close to the national average. Through consistently good teaching, this good progress is sustained successfully at both key stages. A good number are working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6, including disadvantaged pupils.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's duty of care responsibility is high priority, especially in safeguarding the well-being of the increasing number of disadvantaged pupils who are often the most vulnerable. Governors understand fully their statutory responsibilities to keep children safe. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are thorough. Governors conduct regular health and safety checks. Staff responsible for safeguarding ensure that all procedures are followed diligently and any concerns logged precisely. Leaders regularly review policies related to keeping pupils safe. They check that all staff and governors are up to date in their safeguarding training and that they and the parents and carers understand the school's safeguarding arrangements, and they act promptly if they have concerns about any child or their family. Leaders follow up all absences urgently and instigate legal action if necessary to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Staff provide advice and guidance to children and families on how to stay healthy and safe, and about their emotional and mental health, and they alert other agencies promptly if concerns arise.

Pupils are well cared for at school and they say they feel safe. As one pupil explained, 'All the gates and doors are locked all the time so nobody can get in without permission.' Parents agree that the school's care arrangements are good. Staff keep parents fully informed if they have any concerns about their children and refer to other agencies if necessary. Pupils say that they love school and are happy there because teachers look after them and help them to learn. They say that teachers tell them how to stay safe in school and outside with talks on internet safety and the risks posed by social media sites and cyber bullying. They know that you should not post personal details or photographs on the internet because strangers can use the information to harm you or your family. Younger children talk about not going with strangers or taking sweets from them. Pupils know that bullying is unacceptable and say that teachers deal with any incidents firmly. As one pupil explained, 'Your parents get told too. It is really unkind to bully people and you would not like it if it happened to you. Everyone looks out for you in school and we can tell our teachers if we have any worries at school or at home.'

## **Inspection findings**

- Following a decline in pupils' performance at the end of key stage 2 in 2016, I examined pupils' performance data from 2017 to confirm that the school's actions to accelerate pupils' progress were sustained and that current pupils are making good progress. Pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2017 did better than in the previous year and better than pupils nationally, including at the higher level in mathematics and writing. Pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 6 were much improved on those in 2016 but still lower than expected in reading and mathematics. The school's combined score for reading, writing and mathematics, at 53%, was below that found nationally. This was mainly due to a few pupils falling just short of their targets, particularly among the disadvantaged group who had a combined score of only 29%. The school's current pupils' progress data and work in pupils' books show that pupils are making good progress at both key stages and that an increased proportion of pupils are working at greater depth. Occasionally, a few pupils at key stage 2, working on the borderline

between the age-related expectations and greater depth, lack the confidence to attempt harder tasks. They are generally well capable but are hesitant when not directed sufficiently.

- I examined the progress of disadvantaged pupils who, in 2017, failed to achieve as well as non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and all pupils nationally. Almost 50% of the Year 6 pupils in 2017 were disadvantaged, and of these over half joined the school part way through key stage 2 and so did not benefit from the good teaching in the earlier years. A number of these pupils had considerable gaps in their learning due to many disruptions in their learning over time. A few were also from families where English was not the home language. While their performance in 2017 was disappointing, from their invariably low starting points most made good progress. Increased support this year, often on an individual level, is proving effective. These pupils are making good progress. Many more are working at greater depth than was the case last year. The additional funding to support these pupils is proving effective.
- Pupils' performance in writing at the end of both key stages was considerably higher than their performance in reading and mathematics in 2016 and 2017. Writing is teacher assessed so I checked whether teachers' assessments were accurate and reliable. The school's assessments were examined by external advisers in 2016 and found to be fair and accurate. Teachers regularly attend meetings with other schools to check that they are assessing pupils' writing accurately, and partner schools undertake reviews to verify that assessments are correct. Work in pupils' books indicates that writing is consistently of high quality. Many pupils are working at greater depth simply because they like writing. Work in pupils' books is well constructed and shows that pupils apply their basic literacy skills effectively.
- I also evaluated the effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that the rapid improvement in pupils' outcomes in 2017 is being sustained. You and your deputy spent considerable time with me observing classes. We were in total agreement that we saw effective learning in all classes. Pupils were well engaged, industrious and keen to learn. Through classroom observations, scrutiny of pupils' books, and regular discussions with pupils about their learning and staff about their teaching, you have an accurate picture of pupils' progress. You involve subject leaders in this monitoring. Where teaching needs improving, you plan relevant training and support to help teachers develop their skills. You check that teachers' assessments are accurate and that all pupils are on track to achieve well. While outcomes are rising, you agree that some pupils at key stage 2 could be challenged further, especially less confident learners who have the capacity to achieve more. Examples of outstanding practice in the school indicate that the school is well poised to improve further.
- You provide a rich and engaging curriculum that holds pupils' interest and extends their knowledge and skills effectively. Resources are generally good to support teaching and learning, but the outside provision for children in the early years is not as well equipped as it might be for children to explore and extend their skills further in a wider setting. Teachers plan topics that link subjects together to make better sense to pupils as they explore various periods in history, consider environmental issues, debate diversity in the world in which they live and reflect on their place in society as young citizens. Visits to places of interest such as museums and historical landmarks, visitors who introduce them to a wider world and a rich array of extra-

curricular activities, and clubs all contribute to pupils' happy experience of school. Staff work hard to meet the pupils' various needs and those who are at the school long enough achieve well not only in their learning but also in their personal development. Despite the school's best efforts, some pupils lack in confidence and self-esteem and so do not always achieve as well as they could, worried that they might not succeed if they attempt more taxing challenges.

- The school supports pupils' individual needs effectively and promotes their personal development and well-being effectively. Pupils are courteous, sensible, friendly and well behaved, and conduct themselves sensibly at all times. They take responsibilities as prefects and other leadership roles seriously. Many make themselves useful in other ways including children in the early years acting as classroom monitors to help teachers. Most try hard to do their best and help each other without hesitation, following the good examples teachers model at all times.
- The school's calm, well-ordered and welcoming environment provides all pupils with a safe and secure start to their education. Pupils make good progress and are well prepared for secondary school. Most attend regularly because they know that school and learning are very important. They form good friendships and willingly help others in lessons and around the school generally. As one pupil explained eloquently, 'I love school because all my friends are here and the teachers really care about us.'
- Parents are generally very positive about the school and are happy that their children enjoy being there. They are particularly positive about the many activities and clubs that their children enjoy, and the good care arrangements to keep their children safe. A few parents expressed less positive views about various matters including communications between school and home. Information on the school's website and in newsletters is plentiful, and staff are very approachable and more than willing to address any concerns parents might have at a time convenient for all.
- You have instigated improvements that are having the impact they should on raising pupils' progress. Provision overall is good. Teaching and learning are securely strong and pupils are benefiting as a result. Children in the early years make a flying start to their education. An increasing number attain a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year. This strong start supports pupils' good progress in subsequent years very effectively. Pupils are safe, happy and well cared for in school and all are valued equally. Those facing difficult challenges in their lives, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well through effective support. You have the support of governors, staff, the academy trust and parents to improve the school further.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers challenge all pupils further but especially those in key stage 2 who lack confidence in their learning in mathematics
- they do more to promote pupils' confidence, self-esteem and resilience so that they are better equipped to challenge themselves further
- pupils have more opportunities to read aloud to others in school

- the outside area in the early years is better resourced to extend children's learning in a wider setting.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Nottingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North East Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and all your staff, the vice-chair of the governing body and one other governor. I also met with senior leaders including some subject leaders and other staff. I spoke by telephone with a representative of the multi-academy trust. I reviewed documentation relating to pupils' progress and achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and examined the evidence therein. I observed pupils around the school, including in the playground and the dining hall, and in classes. Together with your deputy headteacher, I visited all classes and discussed these observations. I looked at books, spoke to pupils about their work and listened to them read. I also met with pupils to get their views of the school. (No pupils submitted any responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.) I considered the views of the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the nine text messages submitted by parents to Ofsted and the letter I received from one parent or carer. I also considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.