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Mrs Helen McLaughlin
Headteacher
Our Lady and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs McLaughlin

Short inspection of Our Lady and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 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 the school was judged to be good in December 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 and your leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders have produced detailed plans that outline what it is you intend to do to take your next steps forward. You are reflective as well as forward thinking and you take care to consider research and the latest educational agendas when deciding how to improve the school. You have established a strong sense of teamwork, and staff are supportive of you and of each other. Staff appreciate that you consider their workload and that you trust them to try out new approaches.

You are relentless in your drive to improve the quality of teaching, so that it is good or better. Regular checks on teaching and learning, along with training, sharing good practice, careful resourcing and precise improvement actions, result in current pupils making good progress throughout the school.

The school environment is impressive. The school is tidy and well organised and the displays around school are of a high quality. Displays give visitors a good understanding of the rich variety of experiences that your pupils enjoy. Examples of pupils' work on display show that they take pride in what they do and rise to your high expectations.

Pupils behave well. They move around the school sensibly and they are polite and courteous, holding doors open for one another. In classrooms, pupils persevere with tasks and remain focused throughout lessons. They are supportive of one another and are confident when contributing to class discussions.

Parents and carers have overwhelming confidence in the support leaders and staff give their children, socially and academically. Parents feel well informed about their child's learning and feel that leaders ensure that their children are safe, well cared for and supported effectively to make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding lead, you make sure that all policies and procedures are in place and up to date and that everyone has a clear understanding of how to keep pupils safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Leaders provide staff with regular updates to ensure that they maintain a good awareness of current safeguarding agendas. Staff understand how to recognise important issues, and the school has an effective system in place for recording and monitoring concerns.

Appropriate checks are made to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Staff who are new to the school receive information about the school's safeguarding procedures so that they are well prepared when they start work at the school. Governors receive timely information about the school's safeguarding procedures and provide leaders with challenge to ensure that all policies are followed closely. Pupils receive regular teaching about safety, in lessons and assemblies. In school, pupils feel safe and are confident that any issues they have would be dealt with swiftly by adults. Pupils reported that there is no bullying and that they know whom they should talk to if they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- During the last inspection, inspectors recommended that you improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in mathematics by ensuring that the most able pupils were sufficiently challenged. Inspectors also recommended that teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to apply their problem-solving skills. In 2018, provisional data showed that the most able pupils made slower progress than other groups. Not enough of the most able pupils reached the higher standards in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. I wanted to find out what you have done to support these pupils to make better progress.
- You have provided time for the mathematics leader to give high levels of support to staff. The mathematics leader has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching in the school. He has provided training for staff in order to develop their subject knowledge and has given them ideas so that they can plan interesting activities. The mathematics leader has worked alongside adults to demonstrate how they can use resources to help pupils understand difficult mathematical

concepts. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. For example, pupils begin with a fluency task each day before moving on to problem-solving and reasoning tasks. Work in books shows that pupils spend time practising their skills and study different areas of mathematics in depth. Pupils take a pride in their work and books are neatly presented. As a result, pupils are now making better progress and, for most, progress is good.

- However, when the mathematics leader and I looked at books, we found that sometimes, the most able pupils spend too much time on tasks that they can already complete. This means that their progress is sometimes limited. Similarly, some low prior attaining pupils do not get the opportunity to spend time on the more demanding problem-solving or reasoning tasks because they do not finish the fluency tasks in time. This means that their opportunities to use problem-solving and reasoning skills are limited. Further work is needed to address this.
- Following your last inspection, inspectors recommended that you improve the quality of leadership and management by developing the role of subject leaders so that they carefully checked the impact of their work. When I checked your website, I found that there was information missing about the curriculum that your pupils receive. For these reasons, I wanted to find out if your pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum and whether they build upon their learning effectively as they move up through the school.
- You provide your pupils with their full entitlement to the national curriculum. This is organised by teaching subjects through some interesting themes. Teachers plan activities in a variety of ways; pupils enjoy the experience of listening to visitors, visiting places of interest, joining in practical activities and making choices about how they present their learning. Pupils produce examples of beautiful work. They take a real sense of pride when completing work for their topic books and this, again, is underpinned by the high expectations you have. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- You have now taken steps to make the required information about your curriculum available for parents on your school website. Leaders also provide teachers with information about what it is they need to teach pupils in each year group. However, you recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils build effectively upon what they have already learned in subjects beyond English and mathematics. When we looked at pupils' work, we found that there are occasions when work is of a similar level in different year groups. In some subject areas such as geography and design technology, pupils do not get the opportunity to study subject material in depth. Your two curriculum leaders work hard to try and check how well pupils make progress in a wide range of subject areas. However, they do not yet check the quality of learning in subjects other than English and mathematics carefully enough. This means that they are not able to plan the necessary steps to make improvements in these subjects. You recognise that this is an important area to address.
- Provisional outcomes at the end of Year 6 in 2018 showed that the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. Even so, the progress of high prior attaining pupils

was slower than that of other groups of pupils. Given pupils' starting points, too few reached the higher standards. Therefore, I wanted to find out how effectively teachers challenge the most able pupils and check whether their current rates of progress across key stage 2 are better.

- When I visited lessons, I found that teachers and other adults questioned pupils effectively to prompt them to think more deeply. Adults thought carefully about the questions they asked, encouraging pupils to justify their answers by drawing upon evidence in books or from knowledge they had learned in previous lessons. Your focus upon developing the language that pupils use has prompted teachers to challenge pupils to use more demanding vocabulary. For example, pupils in one class studied various texts to gather more demanding vocabulary that they could use to improve their writing about the Iron Man. Teaching assistants provide effective support. They encourage pupils to persevere with tasks and guide them skilfully, allowing them to develop the independence they need to succeed when working on their own.
- Although most-able pupils currently in key stage 2 are starting to make better progress, progress is still not consistently good. Sometimes, the tasks that teachers plan are not sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. Occasionally, there is no additional expectation for these pupils and this means that they finish tasks quickly or do not get an opportunity to build upon what they already know. When I spoke to some of the most able pupils, they said that they found the tasks they were completing 'too easy'. I found that in some classrooms, adults were not aware that the most able pupils were finding their work too easy and this meant that adults were not able to increase levels of challenge quickly enough. Increasing the progress that the most able pupils make is an important area of improvement. You have already identified this within your school improvement plans.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan mathematics lessons that enable low prior attaining pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills
- pupils build effectively upon what they have previously learned in subjects other than English and mathematics and study subjects such as geography and design technology in greater depth
- subject leaders monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching in subjects across the curriculum and use this to make further improvements
- teachers plan tasks carefully so that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged throughout lessons
- teachers and other adults respond more effectively to the changing needs of pupils within lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Jaimie Holbrook
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders and discussed my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the subject leaders for mathematics and for science, curriculum leaders and the designated safeguarding leader. I considered 44 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 34 free-text comments. I visited classes in key stages 1 and 2. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.

I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.