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Mr Simon Lawman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Lawman

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 September 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You have created a happy and harmonious school community at St Joseph's. Teachers told me that they enjoy working at the school, and parents said that they value highly the quality of education provided and the care, guidance and support that their children receive each day. Pupils said that they are proud of their school, and that they enjoy learning. They also said that everybody gets on well with one another. These positive attitudes are reflected in the fact that pupils are rarely absent, and overall attendance has been above the national average for the past three years.

Leadership at the school is strong and highly effective. Along with other leaders, you have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the few areas that need further improvement. The governing body has a wide range of expertise and provides excellent levels of challenge and support. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and make regular visits, to see for themselves how well the school supports pupils' welfare and promotes their academic progress.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to further strengthen leadership by developing the role of subject leaders in monitoring standards. You have made good progress in addressing this issue, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics, where subject leaders routinely lead training for staff and make regular checks on pupils' progress. The improvements they have overseen are reflected in the extremely high standards being achieved at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.

You were also asked, at the previous inspection, to further improve teaching, which was judged to be good at the time. You have had success in addressing this issue. Staff told me that they receive good support and have access to regular, high-quality training. As a result, they enjoy teaching and share your commitment to continuous improvement. The changes that you have overseen to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have led to pupils across the school making rapid progress and achieving standards at the end of key stage 2 that are well above the national average.

Parents are highly supportive of the school and your leadership. This was captured in the view of one parent, who wrote, 'Our children have a very happy school life at St Joseph's. They love every aspect of school from learning to interacting with friends. They feel safe and well looked after and are flourishing in this amazing school environment.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has comprehensive safeguarding systems and procedures in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities and receive regular safeguarding training and updates. Any actions taken to support pupils' safety and well-being are proportionate and carefully documented. The governing body maintains a well-informed overview of safeguarding arrangements. A designated safeguarding governor visits the school regularly to scrutinise the school's records and ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

Pupils told me that they feel safe and secure at the school. They said that bullying 'doesn't happen' at St Joseph's, and they expressed confidence that adults would help them if they had any concerns or worries. The Year 6 pupils that I spoke to also demonstrated a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. The parents I met with before school, and all of those who responded to Parent View, said that their children are safe, happy and well looked after at the school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry during this inspection was to see how well pupils achieved in the wider curriculum and to establish whether the high standards being achieved in reading, writing and mathematics are replicated in other subjects. The school provides a broad and engaging curriculum and pupils have a wealth

of interesting learning experiences. Pupils I spoke to said that they particularly enjoy art and music. Pupils benefit from working with a sports coach and language teacher. They also have regular trips out of school, including residential visits for older pupils. I saw evidence of some challenging work in science, with pupils regularly undertaking investigations and making accurate recordings of their work. However, pupils' learning in geography is not as effective. The work that teachers set in this subject does not provide regular challenge for pupils or build successfully on what they already know about human and physical geography.

- Secondly, I looked at the quality of provision in early years, as there had been a slight dip in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the last school year. Previously, this figure had been well above the national average. Children get off to a good start in early years. The school develops close links with parents and this helps to ensure that children make a smooth transition into school life. Staff provide a stimulating, well-organised learning environment, both indoors and outside. During this inspection, I saw children listening attentively to staff and fully engrossed in their learning. Staff make regular, detailed assessments of children's learning, to establish how well children are progressing. They plan activities that build well on children's prior learning. As a result, children typically make strong progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education at the end of Reception Year.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at the school's work to support pupils who are disadvantaged. Work to improve outcomes for these pupils has a high profile at the school and has been extremely successful. Leaders and teachers are sharply focused on the progress that disadvantaged pupils make. They ensure that funding is used well to provide additional support, where needed, and to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities to engage in all aspects of school life. As a result, disadvantaged pupils do well and consistently achieve standards that are equal to, or better than those of all pupils nationally.
- During the inspection, I also looked at the quality of writing. I scrutinised pupils' books from the previous school year and recent assessments that have been made of pupils' work. Pupils have regular, carefully planned opportunities to write at length in English lessons. There was clear evidence that pupils progress strongly as they move through the school. I saw many examples of high-quality writing, with pupils responding well to the precise feedback provided by teachers. Pupils also take great care with their handwriting and presentation. The proportion of pupils reaching the national average at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 has been well above the national average for the past two years. The proportion judged to be working at greater depth has also been well above average.
- There is also a strong and effective focus on reading at St Joseph's. Phonics teaching is highly effective, and the vast majority of pupils develop into successful, independent readers during key stage 1. Pupils across the school are encouraged to read regularly and class novels are used to help develop a shared love of reading. Standards are high across the school. Provisional key stage 2

results for 2018 show that all Year 6 pupils achieved the expected standard in reading and half of the cohort were judged to be working at greater depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements are made to the teaching of geography, so that pupils develop a broader understanding of the human and physical features of the world.

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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher and all four class teachers. I met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also met with the school's adviser. I visited all classrooms, with the headteacher, to observe teaching and learning, and spent time looking at the quality of work in pupils' books from the previous school year. I spoke with a group of Year 6 pupils about various aspects of school life and observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at dinner time. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, safeguarding information, and records relating to the checks that are made on pupils' work. I spoke to several parents in the playground before school and took account of the 26 responses to Parent View.