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Mr Michael Calnan  
Head of School  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
155 Aldershot Road  
Guildford  
Surrey  
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Dear Mr Calnan

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

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Katherine Powell, 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 May 2013.

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

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

You, your staff and governors have a clear vision for the school that promotes the achievement of every pupil within a caring community based on Christian values. This strong sense of community permeates the school, providing care and support for pupils, their families and staff. You also have high expectations for the pupils.

Pupils learn in a happy, calm, orderly environment. During our visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful, with pupils working diligently and cooperating well. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy school. Responses to Ofsted's online parent and staff questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive. Virtually all parents would recommend the school and appreciate the teaching and support their children receive. One parent spoke for many when they said, 'a great school that is teaching my child to learn, as well as grow as an individual'. Many parents commented on how approachable staff are, on pupils' good manners and on how well pupils are prepared for secondary school.

The school has been through a period of change in leadership since the previous inspection in May 2013. The headteacher at the time of the last inspection retired at the end of August 2015. The headteacher who followed remained in post for two years. In September, you stepped up from your long-standing deputy headteacher role to lead as head of school, overseen by a part-time executive headteacher. Aply

supported by your new deputy headteacher, you have achieved a smooth transition to the new leadership structure, which has rapidly earned the respect and confidence of the whole school community. You are using the school's quest to achieve the UNICEF 'Rights Respecting Schools Award' to establish your vision for the school as a safe and inspiring place to learn, where children are respected and able to thrive. This project aligns closely with the school's Christian values.

Other changes to leadership include a new chair and vice-chair of governors, which has given fresh impetus to the impact of governance. Skilled governors make regular visits to check the work of the school. They are well aware of the school's strengths and of those aspects which could be even better. Governors are ambitious and have high expectations for the new senior leadership team. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school's development plan concentrates on the right priorities to secure further improvement.

In 2016, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were above national levels. However, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was in line with the national average and progress in writing was below the national average. A couple of years ago, leaders decided to change the way mathematics was taught. The subject leader introduced a new approach, designed to provide greater challenge and promote deeper thinking. The 2017 provisional results at the end of key stage 2 show that attainment in mathematics, at both the expected and higher standard, rose and pupils' progress was above the national average. Achievement in reading has also improved, with pupils' progress and attainment, at both expected and higher standards, being well above the national average. These improved results show the positive impact of better teaching.

You rightly identified that pupils' achievement in writing is not as strong as their achievement in reading and mathematics. You have established a new leadership team for English, to drive the necessary improvements in writing. They quickly identified the required changes to the curriculum and teaching to secure rapid improvement. More engaging texts have been introduced and teachers' expectations of pupils' writing raised. Staff training and development are well underway and appropriately ambitious targets for pupils' outcomes have been set. Work in pupils' books shows positive signs of improvement, but the full impact is not yet evident.

Previous leaders were slower in establishing the new national curriculum and an effective assessment system in key stage 1. As a result, although a higher proportion of children than the national average achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year, the outcomes of these pupils at the end of Year 2 have been broadly in line with the national average for the last two years. New leaders, who are focusing on key stage 1, show a sound understanding of what needs to be done to improve pupils' progress through the key stage. Teaching, particularly in Year 1, is not moving pupils on to more demanding work quickly enough.

You have maintained the strengths identified at the last inspection. Pupils feel safe and happy and the school imparts its moral and spiritual values very well. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes, where they settle and learn quickly. Governors and leaders at all levels know your school well and are honest about its strengths and those aspects which could be better. You have also addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified previously, including improving the quality of feedback to pupils, particularly regarding their spelling and punctuation. Staff appreciate the effective training and professional development they have received and are keen to refine their practice further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. You are committed to ensuring that pupils are safe at all times and that a culture of safeguarding permeates the school. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training. Staff know pupils very well and they are alert to any concerns, which they follow up swiftly. Leaders ensure that they seek the right advice from other agencies when needed. The family support worker supports families and children experiencing difficulties. Parents, staff and pupils are united in their view that pupils are safe in school. There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including learning about online safety. Pupils are confident that any concerns about bullying will be followed up rapidly and effectively by staff.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, pupils' achievements in writing, the effectiveness of teaching and pupils' progress through key stage 1, and the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- There is a very strong and consistent focus on Christian values. Pupils show respect for others and play harmoniously together. Diversity is celebrated and all members of the community are equally valued, cared for and supported. One Year 4 boy explained how pupils take note of the weekly 'ethos statement'. For example, this week he is trying to be 'fair and just' by including all those who want to play with him.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning. They know what is expected of their learning and behaviour. They gain confidence in a caring environment with high expectations and, as a result, are well prepared academically and socially for their next steps in education. We saw children in the early years, and pupils in all other years, responding well to adults' encouraging approach.
- At the last inspection, inspectors identified the need to strengthen advice to teachers to help improve the quality of teaching. You have taken effective action to address this. For example, the mathematics subject leader has used his expertise to model a new approach to teaching mathematics effectively. This has

contributed to an improvement in pupils' achievement in mathematics throughout key stage 2.

- A review of pupils' work with English, mathematics and science leaders showed generally strong progress across the curriculum by pupils in key stage 2, including disadvantaged pupils. An increasing focus on scientific enquiry is helping pupils to develop a deeper understanding of scientific concepts and also enabling pupils to use their knowledge to explain the results of their experiments and their observations. There is some inconsistency in the rates of pupils' progress for writing. This appears to be linked to pupils' responses to teachers' feedback and guidance, which do not consistently meet the school's expectations. The leaders for English have suitable plans to bring the standard of pupils' work up to the best.
- During visits to lessons in Years 1 and 2, and following discussion with leaders, it is clear that teaching in key stage 1 is not yet providing enough stretch and challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able. Teaching also needs to further improve provision to meet the needs of the increasing number of pupils joining the school who speak English as an additional language.
- The inclusion leader tracks the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully and governors check the impact of pupil premium funding on their progress and well-being. Overall, disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress, especially in Years 3 and 4.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make better progress in writing by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2
- teaching provides more consistent challenge for pupils in key stage 1 so that they achieve better outcomes across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, the executive headteacher, your deputy headteacher, your inclusion manager, subject and phase leaders and three governors, including the

chair and vice-chair. Inspectors visited classes across all year groups in the school with you or your deputy headteacher. Samples of pupils' work were reviewed across key stages 1 and 2. I considered 40 responses by staff to Ofsted's online survey. I took careful account of 204 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke with family members dropping off and meeting their children at the beginning and end of the school day. We spoke with pupils during playtime and I met groups of pupils from Years 4 and 6. We looked at documents, including the school's improvement plans, information about pupils' learning and progress, minutes of meetings and records regarding safeguarding.