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26 January 2017

Elizabeth Connolly  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Connolly

### **Short inspection of St Joseph and St Bede RC Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 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 January 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 have developed a caring school where the individual strengths and interests of pupils are welcomed and promoted. You strive to make sure the school responds well to the challenges typically faced by local families by offering help wherever you can. You set high expectations that every pupil will succeed. You make St Joseph and St Bede an oasis of calm support and learning. One member of the governing body captured this well in the comment: 'When I leave this school after a visit, I always feel better than when I came in.'

You make sure the Catholic ethos of the school continues to shape the life of staff and pupils. This shows in the strong promotion of values such as respect, honesty and joy, as well as developing pupils' strong understanding of their own Catholic faith.

For pupils, this is a school where there are many extra-curricular opportunities to develop new skills or be given further help whenever learning is difficult. There is a strong emphasis on doing your best and on your work being celebrated in special books or displayed carefully around the school. Several displays of pupils' learning in corridors are presented beautifully. Across classes, pupils show positive attitudes to learning and settle well in lessons.

At the previous inspection, inspectors recommended that the school continue to improve the quality of teaching. Over the last four years you have made sure that

pupils benefit from good and better teaching across subjects. At times this has been challenging, and in 2016 there was a hiccup in how well pupils did in key stage 1. Leaders have addressed this issue quickly and successfully. Your decisions in appointing new staff, as well as challenging, supporting and developing your existing team, are well considered and continue to strengthen teaching across the school.

A further recommendation at the previous inspection was that you raise pupils' achievement in mathematics. You have achieved improvement by addressing this issue with great determination. You have succeeded in making sure pupils across the school have well-developed problem-solving skills that they use well in mathematics and other subjects. You have overhauled how pupils look at next steps in their own learning so they consider fully how they might improve their work. Given national changes in the teaching of mathematics since the last inspection, you have responded well to this new challenge. Staff are learning and using many new skills in teaching this subject and there is now a buzz of excitement linked to mathematics across classes. We discussed that your next key step is to focus even more sharply on the needs of the most able pupils so they fulfil every aspect of their potential to achieve highly in mathematics and other subjects.

The previous strength of the school in the early years remains. This is because you have invested in supporting the further development of staff working with the youngest children. You make sure that staff learn from their active involvement in wider early years work with the local authority. This is bringing benefit to the school, not least in better teaching. Children in the early years make strong progress in their learning and the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception is now above the national average. This good start to school extends into Year 1 where pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check is now above the national figures.

You believe in promoting inclusion for all pupils. For example, you have worked successfully to review all aspects of the school to meet the needs of supporting pupils who are dyslexic. This has resulted in the school achieving a national accreditation for supporting dyslexia.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders make sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders establish prompt, extensive liaison and sharing of information with other agencies to support pupils and their families. Staff are given regular, up-to-date training about child protection. Staff are vigilant and know the signs of possible harm to watch out for in pupils' appearance, conduct or comments. They know how to report and chase up any concerns they may have about pupils or adults. Staff know how to prevent serious issues, such as pupils being exposed to radicalised views of modern Britain. There is a successful focus on teaching pupils about safety through lessons, assemblies and special events. Good arrangements are in place to keep the success of safeguarding under review, including checks on the school's work to promote pupils' safe use of the internet.

## Inspection findings

- The ongoing strengths of the school in teaching, leadership and management, pupils' achievement, personal skills and behaviour indicate why St Joseph and St Bede remains a good school. Your reviews of the work of staff are precise and accurate. Your plans for the future are clear and well considered.
- You have developed a strong team of leaders to work with you. Together you give careful attention to developing a skilled and passionate team of staff across the school. New staff are welcomed into the school. You value their expertise and you make sure they are supported fully.
- Children achieve well in the early years and make good progress. They continue to achieve well in Year 1. Nevertheless, some weaknesses emerged in what pupils could do in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 in 2016. You tackled this matter quickly and successfully. For example, you have re-organised how staff and leaders work in classes. You have provided extra training and support for staff about how to teach and assess pupils in key stage 1. Leaders are keeping an even closer check on the work of staff and providing extra help where needed. As a result, pupils currently in key stage 1 are now enjoying consistently good teaching. Pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to make the progress expected of them this year.
- You are making sure that close attention is given to supporting pupils who are in key stage 2. Assessments of pupils and of teaching is being focused very closely on pupils' next steps. As a result, pupils in Year 3 are now catching up rapidly with where they need to be in their learning across subjects. In key stage 2 in 2016, pupils achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A new strength of the school is the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in mathematics. Staff are participating with enthusiasm in a local mathematics project. School leaders are determinedly making sure staff understand the changed requirements of the new national curriculum. Staff are using their increased knowledge of the subject, and of teaching mathematics, well. There is much increased enjoyment and confidence among staff in teaching this subject in the school. Pupils I spoke with are excited by mathematics and say it is helping them to think and solve problems. Consequently, there is above-average attainment by pupils in mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Some middle-ability and most-able pupils are doing particularly well. Parents report high levels of satisfaction with the quality and impact of mathematics teaching in key stage 2.
- Since the previous inspection, a greater proportion of pupils have been achieving highly across subjects. Now that national expectations have been raised, you recognise that more of the most able pupils in key stage 1 and 2 need to achieve beyond what is expected of other pupils. Across subjects, the most able pupils are increasingly working with greater understanding, precision, independence and complexity than other pupils. Challenging targets are now being shared with pupils to stretch the learning of the most able and to help others to aim highly.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are given even greater challenge in their learning so they achieve beyond expected standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders to discuss your evaluation of the school and your priorities for improvement. You and I observed teaching across a sample of classrooms, spoke to pupils, looked at a range of pupils' work and considered other information about pupils' progress. I reviewed school records about checks made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. I met with six governors including the chair. I met with a representative of Bury local authority. I spoke to parents as they brought their children to school. I reviewed the views of parents given through the Ofsted Parent View website.

The inspection was observed by an Ofsted inspector who played no part in the judgements made about the school.