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Marcella Romano
Acting headteacher
St Mary & St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Romano

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of St Mary & St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 13 March 2025, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school meets the monitoring threshold as set out in the [Monitoring Inspection Handbook](#).

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, school leaders, trust leaders and trustees the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also met with groups of staff and pupils. In addition, I carried out lesson visits, scrutinised curriculum documentation, looked at pupils' work in early years and history and scrutinised the school's plans for improvement. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but some aspects of the school need further improvement.

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure teachers use assessment carefully during lessons to check pupils have understood the learning before moving on.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the school's leadership. An acting headteacher was in post from September to December last year and then you began as acting headteacher in January. The trust worked diligently to secure long-term leaders through the absence of the substantive headteacher so that staff have felt supported through this time of change. The trust has worked closely with the school. Together with the trust, you and leaders have taken deliberate and decisive action to address the areas for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection report. The school is making great strides, but some work needs further refinement and time to embed.

Leaders have designed the curriculum to include the most important knowledge pupils need to learn at each stage, from the early years. You have ensured the curriculum is sequenced progressively so that it builds on previous learning. Within early years, you have worked with your leaders to design an early years curriculum that suits the needs of your children. You have recognised that the development of children's fine motor skills needs particular attention. You have thought carefully about how to develop this within the curriculum. As a result, children's dexterity is improving. The early years environment is stimulating and well matched to the intended learning. You have worked with staff to match tasks to learning, for example in history. The vocabulary pupils should know has been decided on with precision. This means pupils gain the language they need to talk about their learning. For example, younger pupils can explain who a monarch is and give some examples of notable monarchs. Your leaders check the impact of the planned curriculum and use this information to shape the curriculum.

Pupils have a more secure understanding of some areas of learning than others. For example, pupils struggle to link current to prior learning. They have some gaps in their learning caused by the previous curriculum. You have begun to develop the school's approach as to how teachers should check how well pupils have learned the curriculum. There is further work to do on this.

Since the previous inspection, the trust has supported the school through a time of change. They acted quickly to improve the quality of education that pupils experience. These changes have not restricted the school's development. You are making the most important changes to help to improve the quality of education. You have focused on developing leaders at all levels to design and monitor the impact of their curriculum areas. You, trust leaders and those responsible for governance know the school well. You have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and areas that need development or refinement. Your improvement plans are sharply focused on the areas that need your attention first. The trust and school measure progress against these areas regularly. The trust has provided helpful and targeted support which you and your staff appreciate.

You have also engaged positively with the support provided by a local hub to help with mathematics teaching. This has ensured staff feel more confident in teaching mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of Plymouth CAST Multi-Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Plymouth, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lakmini Harkus
His Majesty's Inspector