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Mr Sean Devlin
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Dear Sean Devlin

Short inspection of Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017 with Sukhbir Farar, Ofsted Inspector, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. High results have been sustained across most subjects at key stage 4, and rates of progress are at least in line with national expectations for most pupils. Those pupils who join the school below the expected standard for their age in literacy and numeracy are well supported and almost all catch up with their peers in Year 7.

You are determined that the potential of every child is realised. You show strong commitment to ensuring that the school supports the learning and well-being of all pupils. The school's values are embraced by the school community, with a strong commitment to gospel values and personal achievement.

Staff and pupils meet your high expectations and they agree that the school is an inclusive community where everyone is valued. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel well supported and enjoy their work. The school provides a calm, respectful and harmonious ethos. Close relationships exist between pupils and between pupils and staff. Pupils are polite and courteous around the school site. They are trusted to maintain very high standards of conduct at social times. In lessons, pupils meet the school's very high expectations of behaviour and they show positive attitudes to their learning.

You are particularly proud of work to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils, who require additional support emotionally, socially or with their behaviour, benefit from the 'Sanctuary' programme. Staff, parent and pupil

feedback confirms that the programme successfully develops pupils' confidence, helps them to overcome anxiety and to acquire essential social skills. Pupils maintain a focus on core subjects and generic learning skills.

The school continues to be popular with pupils and their parents. A very large majority of parents agree that their child is well looked after, well taught and makes good progress. Almost all parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to other parents, even though some pupils have to travel quite a distance to attend. Pupils are complimentary about their experiences and they value the support that they receive from teachers that helps them to learn and achieve well. They feel that the school is a friendly community, and staff are good at resolving any problems if they arise. Pupils also appreciate the wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities that are provided for them.

Inspectors in the last report noted that the school should make improvements in mathematics. Since then, you and your leaders have worked hard to secure these improvements. Pupils now attain highly in mathematics and most pupils are making good progress in this subject. However, there is room for further improvement in the attainment and progress in mathematics of high-ability pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged. The school has developed its assessment procedures. These are used well by the majority of staff. For example, in mathematics, most pupils know their targets and how well they are doing currently. Learning activities in mathematics promote understanding and mathematical reasoning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that effective systems are in place to safeguard pupils. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Detailed records are maintained and these are of good quality. The school works well with a range of other agencies when necessary and referral processes are robust and secure. Staff receive appropriate and regular training and updates about safeguarding. Staff agree that pupils are safe in school.

Pupils gain knowledge and understanding about the ways in which they can keep themselves safe through tutorials and assemblies, some of which are from external presenters. A recent performance to Year 10 of the play 'The Echo Chamber' provided a powerful learning experience highlighting risks of extremism and radicalisation.

Pupils feel safe in school, and they believe that where bullying happens it is reported and dealt with robustly. However, parental feedback shows that a few parents are concerned about how effectively leaders tackle bullying.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and governors know the school well. They are aware of its strengths and those areas that need to improve further. Governors provide effective support and challenge to leaders. Governors scrutinise information

about achievement, attendance, behaviour and teaching and ask leaders searching questions. You ensure that leaders and staff focus upon the key areas identified for further improvement, for example prioritising the promotion of reading resulting in higher literacy standards.

- In 2016 GCSE examinations, your analysis identified that disadvantaged pupils performed significantly less well than other pupils nationally. In the light of this, leaders, governors and staff are working closely together to raise outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The spending of pupil premium funding is effectively planned and evaluated. The school has moved forward with the implementation of their new pupil premium strategy. Subject leaders make sure that classroom teachers are aware of which pupils are disadvantaged. Teachers plan and implement classroom interventions to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils in all years. A range of other interventions, including mentoring, ensure that support meets the needs of individual disadvantaged pupils. A governor has oversight of the school's use of the pupil premium and meets regularly with leaders. Findings are reported regularly to the governing body.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum at key stages 3 and 4. This includes the opportunity for some pupils to study a range of vocational options. Although fewer pupils are entered for the English baccalaureate combination of subjects than the national average, all pupils follow GCSE religious education at key stage 4. The new academic year commences in June. This enables the best use of available learning time, particularly at the start of key stage 4. It also aids a smooth return for pupils to their learning in September.
- Through subject audits, you ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is delivered throughout the curriculum. Fundamental British values are promoted through a range of learning experiences. These include assemblies, additional curriculum activities across several subject areas and talks by visiting speakers.
- You are proud of the large number of pupils in Year 11 who take up the opportunity to join the National Citizen Service programme. In 2016 the school was awarded National Citizen Service 'Champion' status. You review the curriculum annually and have strategic plans to develop this aspect of your work. This academic year, the school launched a new programme to develop health and well-being at key stage 4 while plans are well advanced with a 'Learning for Life' programme in key stage 3. This embodies learning to learn, spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning, careers education and personal and health education.
- You ensure that careers education and guidance provision enables pupils to make the best decisions for their future education and training. One day a week, an adviser is available to provide guidance for pupils. A range of speakers are invited to outline different routes and opportunities and pupils are informed about local careers fairs and open days. The school's website ensures that pupils and parents can easily access information on local providers of post-16 education and training. This includes links to sources of independent advice and guidance.

- In lessons, pupils' learning is enhanced through strong relationships and pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils work diligently and behave well. Pupils confirm that this is the case in most lessons.
- Examination results in 2016 showed pupils made good progress. In English and mathematics their achievement was well above the national average, continuing an established trend. Most pupils' books show high-quality work, in line with age-related and GCSE expectations, and this provides evidence that current pupils are making good progress.
- Leaders carefully, and robustly, track pupils' progress. Your analysis of assessment information shows that the large majority of current pupils in all years are making good progress towards challenging targets. The attainment of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to outcomes in 2016. Teachers use progress information arising from new assessment systems to inform their planning.
- Leaders recognise that the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was significantly below the national average for pupils with similar starting points in 2016. You have responded swiftly to this and put in place a great deal of wide-ranging support these pupils. The school has reviewed its provision for these pupils, for example, by recruiting and deploying teaching assistant to subject specialisms. You continue to monitor the impact of these changes on the progress of these pupils.
- Pastoral leaders work closely with curriculum leaders to monitor pupils' progress and attitudes to learning. Good attendance is rewarded, and praise points are recorded in lessons where progress, attainment or positive behaviour is evident. Every assembly is used to celebrate success and share news of praise and rewards.
- Attendance overall has been above national levels since 2015. This continues to be the case for current pupils. Leaders are aware that the attendance of some more vulnerable groups of pupils is lower and has been slow to improve. Despite the efforts of staff to improve attendance, absence rates for disadvantaged pupils continue to be higher than the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has high priority in your development plans.
- You are committed to supporting individual pupils who show poor behaviour, and you do your best to avoid permanent exclusions, which have been below the national average at your school over time. In a few cases, where pupils are unable to meet the school's high expectations of behaviour, suitable education is arranged with other providers. Leaders keep in touch with these pupils and monitor their attendance and progress accordingly.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced since 2014. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who have received a fixed-term exclusion has increased over time. Fixed term exclusions for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have shown some sign of improvement in recent years, but remain too high.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the remaining differences between the progress, attendance and rate of exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils are reduced
- the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is focused on reducing differences in their progress, rate of exclusions and absence in line with pupils from the same starting points nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernice Astling
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, my colleague and I met with you, senior and middle leaders, and staff. I spoke with five governors. We scrutinised a range of documents including safeguarding policies and your own analysis of pupils' achievement. Inspectors visited all year groups to see teaching and learning across a range of subjects and we also looked at pupils' work. A number of these visits were undertaken alongside school leaders. We met with pupils both formally and informally. Inspectors listened to pupils read. Inspectors considered parents' views through 71 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. 55 staff responses and 52 pupil responses to Ofsted surveys were also analysed.