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Dr Andrew Stone
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Stone

Short inspection of Holy Family Catholic School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018 with Patricia Slonecki and Charlotte Robinson, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 March 2014.

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 a clear vision for the school and are focused on improvement. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, built upon a Catholic ethos, is at the heart of school life. Recruitment and retention of staff is a key priority for you and the governors. Effective strategies, valued by staff, are in place to support their well-being. The school is currently undergoing a building project as a result of expansion in pupil numbers. Leaders are competently managing any disruption to ensure minimum impact on staff and pupils.

You and other leaders have addressed the priorities from the last inspection. School leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and are focused on developing the weaker areas. Outcomes for pupils are improving, particularly in the sixth form. On the day of the inspection, behaviour and conduct of pupils was very good. Pupils say that they enjoy school and value the wide range of opportunities they are given. Parents and carers and staff are supportive of your leadership. You are determined to make further improvements in teaching and learning so that all groups of learners make strong progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders provide staff with regular training on safeguarding procedures. As a result, staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of current safeguarding policies and guidance. Staff are very clear about what they should do if they have concerns

about a pupil, for example if they are thought to be at risk of radicalisation.

Staff are well aware of the potential risks facing young people in the wider community, such as gang affiliation and knife crime. As a result, regular information is shared with pupils on how they can keep themselves safe. Vulnerable pupils are given additional support through mentors and projects such as 'boxing for life'.

Pupils spoken to by inspectors were clear that they had a person to go to if they had a problem, and it would be dealt with. One said, 'Form tutors are like parents to us in this school.' Pupils said that homophobia and racism are not tolerated, and will be firmly addressed by staff. Through the curriculum and 'drop down' days, pupils are taught how to be safe. They are clear about how to keep safe online and when travelling between the two school sites.

A small number of administrative matters, about safeguarding checks, which needed clarification were resolved on the day of the inspection.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, four areas of focus were agreed. The first of these was the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This was because in 2017 progress and examination results in GCSE subjects were below those of other pupils. Inspectors visited classrooms, looked at pupils' work, spoke to staff and analysed data.
- Teachers regularly monitor pupils and record assessment information. Therefore, leaders can easily identify pupils who need additional support to make better progress. Pupil premium funding received by the school is effectively targeted to help individuals in a variety of ways, including mentoring, literacy and numeracy development.
- As a result, in almost all classes visited by inspectors disadvantaged pupils were seen to be making progress in line with their target grades. For example, in a Year 7 French class pupils' work showed progress from writing simple sentences to constructing complex sentences using connectives. In classes where disadvantaged pupils were effectively challenged to develop their understanding and skills, progress was strongest. However, in a few classes visited the progress of disadvantaged pupils was limited because teachers' expectations were not high enough.
- The second area of focus for the inspection was the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN), as identified by the school as needing additional support. This was because in 2017 progress and GCSE examination results for SEN pupils were below those of other pupils. Inspectors visited classrooms, looked at pupils' work, and spoke to teachers.
- Leaders provide teachers with information about pupils who have SEN. However, this information does not always identify the specific learning needs of an individual. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) holds weekly SEN 'surgeries' to provide support for parents and staff, which are well regarded. Teachers have received training on dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorder.

However, teachers have not received training which enables them to support the full range of learners who have SEN.

- In some classes visited by inspectors, progress of pupils who have SEN was good because activities were planned to meet their needs. However, teachers do not always have effective teaching strategies to help this group make strong progress. A few pupils spoken to by inspectors were not clear on how to make their work better. A key area for development is for leaders to ensure that teachers are provided with information about the specific learning needs of their pupils.
- The third area of focus was the sustainability of improved student outcomes in the sixth form. This was because there has been an upward trend in outcomes over the past two years. In 2017 progress was very strong. It has also been a focus of school improvement work. Inspectors looked at students' work, and spoke to sixth-form leaders and students.
- Leaders are focused on achieving positive outcomes for students and have high aspirations for them. They have created a nurturing climate where students can excel. Teachers regularly monitor and track the performance of students. Those who fall behind receive additional support through raising achievement plans, which are having a positive impact on their progress. Entry requirements for subjects have been changed to reflect the new A-level programmes of study. Leaders provide useful guidance to students about appropriate course choices and curriculum pathways. Students spoke positively about the support they receive from staff. This includes strategies to support their mental well-being, which enables them to make progress in their studies. They are effusive about the wider opportunities provided to develop their leadership and community involvement.
- As a result of these strategies, information provided suggests that current students are making excellent progress against their academic targets. Information provided showed that the vast majority of Year 13 students have applied to university or secured high-level apprenticeships.
- The fourth area of focus was the appropriateness of the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. This is because there has been a change to the curriculum structure from September 2017. Pupils now start some GCSE courses in Year 9.
- Leaders and members of the governing body were able to give a clear rationale for the curriculum change. Their aim is to achieve improved outcomes for pupils at key stage 4 in light of the changes to GCSE qualifications. The curriculum change has been well researched. This has included discussions with other schools about the impact of their curriculum models. Parents, staff, and pupils have been widely consulted and are optimistic about the new curriculum.
- As a result, early reports about the curriculum changes are positive. One middle leader commented on the increased opportunities to 'inspire and excite' pupils. Inspectors found that in Year 9 classes pupils were focused and making progress. However, it is too early to evaluate the full impact of these changes on pupils' outcomes. Currently, the school does not have formal strategies in place to evaluate the curriculum changes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers are provided with information about the specific learning needs of their pupils who have SEN and receive appropriate training
- a comprehensive plan is in place to fully evaluate the impact of the recent curriculum changes.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection began with a discussion with yourself about your self-evaluation of the school, the strengths and areas you were working on. Together, we agreed the key lines of enquiry that the inspectors would follow during the inspection. Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at work and spoke with pupils. Inspectors met with school leaders, the designated safeguarding lead and the SENCo. The lead inspector spoke with governors and a representative from the local authority. In addition, inspectors considered responses to the staff survey and pupil survey which were part of the inspection. Also, inspectors analysed the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.