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Mr Martin Tissot
Executive Headteacher
St Thomas More Catholic School
Glendale Avenue
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Dear Mr Tissot

No formal designation inspection of St Thomas More Catholic School

Following my visit with Ofsted inspectors Ian Morris, James Whiting and Yvonne Chisholm to your school on 16 January 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out as a result of Ofsted's risk assessment procedures.

Evidence

Inspectors examined the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We looked at the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plan, work of governors and records of pupils starting at and those leaving the school. We examined the school's curriculum information, including for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. The inspection team reviewed 87 responses made to the online survey, Parent View, and staff surveys conducted by leaders at this school. Inspectors visited 19 classes jointly with senior leaders, observing learning and looking at pupils' work.

Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders and other members of staff, including the designated safeguarding lead. We held discussions with groups of pupils across all year groups, both informally and formally, at the school. I met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body, who is also the chair of members at The Cardinal Hume Academies Trust, the multi-academy trust responsible for the school.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time safeguarding is effective and the overall effectiveness of the school remains outstanding.

Context

There are 1,173 pupils on roll at the school. A high proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with the largest groups from Eastern European, Caribbean and African heritages. Over half of pupils speak English as an additional language at this school. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above average. The proportion of pupils with SEND that have an education, health and care (EHC) plan is small compared to nationally. Staff turnover is low.

The executive headteacher is a national leader of education. He is also executive headteacher of the other two schools within the multi-academy trust and provides support to another secondary school.

Main findings

The school's previous inspection was in June 2013, when it was judged to be outstanding. You, along with the leadership team, have maintained the high quality of education recognised in the school at the time of the last inspection. The school's mission statement 'to lead those in our care to grow in their faith and to benefit from an enriching education' underpins the school's success.

You, along with your leadership team, foster a calm and purposeful environment where pupils make noticeable gains in their learning and achievements. Observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' books confirm that pupils live up to the challenge of high expectations of work. This is further enhanced by pupils' exemplary attitudes towards their learning.

Governors share your ambitions for a culture of excellence where both pupils and staff aspire to be the best they can be. Your determination to maintain high standards for all pupils is evident by your rigorous monitoring of all aspects of school life. The 'teaching school' aspect provides staff with high-quality training and professional development.

You, along with senior leaders and governors, ensure that a culture of safeguarding exists at this school. Strong partnership with external agencies and professional services both internally and externally ensure that vulnerable pupils receive timely support. Written records of reporting concerns confirm this. All staff are suitably trained and understand local contextual and national issues. For instance, they are aware of child criminality, including knife crime, the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. Staff are clear about what to do if they have concerns about pupils' safety. Pupils say that they feel safe because they know that adults in the school will help them.

During the start of this inspection, the inspection team met with you and the head of school to discuss the pertinent issues about the school and the focus of the inspection.

The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the academic year is high compared to numbers nationally. We agreed that the inspection team would consider the effect of pupil movement as one of the key lines of enquiry.

Inspectors examined records, including pupils' destinations, and spoke with senior and middle leaders and pupils. High levels of pupil movement throughout the year are mainly due to pupils' families moving areas or countries. A few pupils leave the school and join other institutions, including alternative provisions, which are best suited for their needs, including those with medical conditions. Leaders track pupils' destinations and inform the local authority of pupil movements at regular intervals. A feature of the school's work is how quickly all newcomers settle into school routines which are crucial to their achievement, personal development and welfare.

The inspection also focused on the progress of current pupils, particularly in science. This was because provisional 2018 results, despite being average, showed a slight drop in the progress of pupils at the end of key stage 4. Similarly, following two years of pupils making excellent progress in science, provisional 2018 results showed a decline to below average. This was partly explained by pupils entered for the incorrect level for the science GCSE examination, which resulted in a considerable number of poor grades. Additionally, low provisional science results contributed to the below-average progress that pupils made towards the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) set of qualifications.

Inspectors observed learning in subjects that make up the EBacc qualification, including science. Secure teaching in science includes intervention sessions which enable pupils to receive extra help when they need it. Pupils value this support, as it helps them to move on to the next steps of their learning. Current pupils' outcomes in science are strong. Excellent teaching in other subjects, such as humanities and languages, enables pupils to make at least good progress over time.

Another agreed area of focus was to examine the school's curriculum in terms of pupils' safety and entries for the EBacc qualification. Inspectors found that the curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to excel. Specialised topics such as sex and relationships education and pupils learning how to keep themselves safe are suitably delivered via the PSHE programme. This, together with other activities, including sports, is highly effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Leaders recognise that the proportion of pupils entered for the EBacc qualification has been below the national average for the last three years. Leaders have identified the reasons for this and so they have actioned strategies to upsurge these entries by 2022. This is already showing signs of improvement, for instance there are increasing proportions of pupils in Year 7 learning a language. Additionally, you and senior leaders review the curriculum regularly to meet the changing needs of the school's population. This includes high levels of pupil movement and the increasing number of pupils joining the school who speak English as an additional language.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recommended that leaders raise sixth-

form achievement. In 2017, published results for sixth-form students were average and improving for both academic and vocational studies. The school's information shows sixth-form students' outcomes as strong at the end of 2018 and for this academic year. During the inspection, visits to sixth-form learning and scrutiny of students' work confirmed this. Effective leadership, rigorous analysis of all activities and teachers' inspiring subject knowledge underpin the improvements to sixth-form achievement.

Determined leadership continues to raise sixth-form achievements, particularly for individual subjects of vocational studies. Leaders have already applied appropriate actions, including providing a greater focus on preparing pupils for their sixth-form studies after key stage 4. Similarly, clear routines promote effective use of students' study times, and effective strategies provide extra support when students need it.

Individualised study programmes in the sixth-form provision, including impartial careers guidance, prepare students very well for their future lives. Students enjoy their wide-ranging experiences, such as work placements or volunteering as a peer mentor. A large proportion of pupils move on and secure university places.

Another area for improvement from the last inspection was for teachers to plan lessons to fully meet the needs of the most able students in each class. We also agreed to include whether teaching meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils. This was because the provisional results for the progress of Year 11 disadvantaged pupils dipped in 2018.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. Teachers are highly effective and meticulous in their planning to support pupils with varying needs and abilities, including the most able. Most pupils, including the disadvantaged, receive demanding work pitched at appropriate levels to suit their understanding. Teachers consistently have high expectations and encourage pupils to take pride in their work, which they astoundingly do. All pupils benefit from high-quality teaching which is supported well by effective relationships. This leads to the progress of current pupils across the curriculum being at least good from their starting points.

The progress of most-able pupils at the end of key stage 4 in 2018 (provisional) improved from 2017 to be high compared to that nationally. Despite the slight decline in the progress of disadvantaged pupils' progress in 2018 (also effected by the school's science results), their current progress is improving.

Governors are stringent in holding school leaders to account for their work, particularly around pupils' welfare, teaching and learning, and outcomes. Governors know the school's strengths and key priorities, as they receive regular and detailed information about the school's performance. This is in the form of headteacher's reports, external reviews of the school and stakeholders' views. For instance, governors meet with pupils to hear their views on how they keep safe in the school. Governors use the information on the school's effectiveness to maintain the high standards of education that pupils receive at this school.

External support

Leaders use external professional services and the local authority to carry out reviews on aspects of the school, including the sixth-form provision and teaching. These reviews have helped leaders consider the next steps in maintaining the outstanding education which exists at this school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to adapt the curriculum to meet the changing needs of the pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Westminster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Haringey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rosemarie McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector