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Peter Byrne
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Dear Peter Byrne

Short inspection of Chatsmore Catholic High School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018 with Peter Fry, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your clear commitment to ensure that every pupil succeeds, regardless of their background or their ability, is shared by all of your staff. You believe passionately that the school makes a difference to pupils' future chances in life and use this as a basis for your determination and commitment. Parents agree that you have made a big difference in a short time with, as one parent explained, '... high expectations of behaviour, attendance, staff and pupils'.

The school's values are underpinned by the strong Catholic ethos. You and your staff have created a caring, supportive and highly motivated learning community where staff, pupils and parents strive for the very best. Pupils reported that they feel safe and well supported in the school. They acknowledged the positive impact of the changes introduced since your arrival such as the rewards policy and the sharp focus on teaching, learning and assessment.

Pupils spoke positively about the commitment of their teaching staff. Their mature behaviour as well as their thoughtful responses to teachers' questions confirm their strong focus on learning. On the day of the inspection, pupils were very well behaved and were keen to show me the corridors which they had painted and explain how the rewards system worked. They spoke with considerable pride about their contribution to the school as councillors and ambassadors.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked leaders to provide opportunities for teachers to share best practice and give pupils time to think and work things out for themselves. You and your leadership team have created many opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively including peer observations and learning walks. Staff also value the many opportunities provided to support their professional development.

Pupils' progress and attainment continue to be close to national averages but rising rapidly. This is due to the greater focus given to outcomes and teachers' higher aspirations about what pupils can achieve. Regular data collections ensure that any underperformance is quickly identified and rectified. Recent data on disadvantaged pupils shows a much more positive picture of their outcomes as a result of focused intervention and sheer determination that no one is left behind.

Leaders are very focused on continuing to ensure consistently high-quality teaching across all subjects, reducing variability and raising the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Governors have a much better understanding of the school and they are now much more confident pursuing responses to their concerns. Parents and carers who completed the Parent View questionnaire are understandably positive about the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet statutory requirements. Records are detailed, up to date and of a high quality. Pupils' welfare is a priority for staff, who are well trained and knowledgeable about potential risks that young people face. Staff are very clear about who they should talk to if they have any safeguarding concerns. Staff have undertaken safer recruitment training and the suitability of staff to work at the school is rigorously checked.

Pupils made clear to inspectors that they felt safe in school. They said that bullying, in all its forms, is dealt with quickly. Through the personal, social and health education programme, pupils said that they have learned about keeping safe as well as disability rights and homophobia. Pupils demonstrate absolute respect for, and genuine interest in, the views and opinions of others.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, four lines of enquiry were agreed with the headteacher and senior staff. The first line of enquiry focused on safeguarding and child protection procedures. Inspectors found that school leaders and staff have successfully instilled a culture of safeguarding across the school. Parents spoken to were clear that their children are safe in school.
- The second line of enquiry considered outcomes for pupils who are disadvantaged and the extent to which these pupils were supported in class. Until recently, the performance of disadvantaged pupils had not improved sufficiently.

Following an external review, the school has had a greater focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

- Staff now actively identify these pupils and data is regularly collected to check their progress against challenging targets. Intervention is sensitively provided and parents are involved. Recent progress, as evidenced through the collected data, in lesson observations and through work samples, confirms much improvement.
- Disadvantaged pupils confirm that they are well supported and that they are more aware that their specific needs are being monitored. Enrichment activities such as swimming lessons and the breakfast club encourage their engagement so that their rates of attendance are also improving.
- The third line of enquiry concerned the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and considered whether variability in provision was being reduced. Inspectors undertook a series of learning walks and identified many strengths in terms of subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements as well as in lesson planning, questioning, homework and assessment.
- Leaders have put in place a comprehensive and wide-ranging programme of professional development to support teachers in developing their skills. Thus, staff are enabled to use a wider range of strategies than previously to support the learning of all pupils. Variability in the quality of provision is reducing well although some curricular areas, such as humanities, have still to improve.
- The fourth area of focus was the leadership and management of the school, given the recent changes. Since your appointment as headteacher, in September 2017, you have had a sharp focus on improving the school, including raising aspirations, improving teaching and boosting outcomes especially for disadvantaged pupils. The capacity for further improvement is very strong.
- Middle leaders confirm that the pace of change has speeded up since your arrival. They say that there is a much greater focus to their work and they feel empowered and supported. They happily contribute ideas about how further improvements can be made. The recently appointed heads of year contribute well to the academic and pastoral support provided by the school. Their liaison with parents is much appreciated.
- During the course of the inspection, it was noted that early-entry arrangements and a lack of focus on the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) were having a detrimental impact on outcomes at the end of Year 11. The school has been quick to respond to the lack of breadth in the curriculum but acknowledges that this is likely to continue to have an impact on the 2018 outcomes.
- The removal of early-entry opportunities, except where entirely appropriate, and a greater focus on the EBacc subjects are having a positive impact on broadening the curriculum and ensuring that it is relevant and appropriate to all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching and learning in humanities are improved, with a particular focus given to helping pupils to improve their work so that pupils achieve well, given their starting points
- outcomes for pupils who are disadvantaged improve to match those of their peers with similar starting points
- the work undertaken to broaden the curriculum supports the needs of all pupils to allow them to match their potential.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, assessment information and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors undertook learning walks, visiting 22 lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. They met with school leaders and middle leaders. The lead inspector spoke with governors, a representative from the local authority and a group of parents. Inspectors took account of the 99 written responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the 40 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 59 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.