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24 May 2013

Mr Peter Mayland  
Headteacher  
St Thomas More Catholic School  
Darlaston Lane  
Bilston  
West Midlands  
WV14 7BL

Dear Mr Mayland

**No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Thomas More Catholic School, Walsall**

Following my visit to your school on 23 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Ofsted had received a qualifying complaint about the school that raised concerns about the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard students.

I sought to establish whether:

- safeguarding procedures are adequate, including the school's response to bullying
- supervision is appropriate to keep students safe in lessons and at break times during the school day
- there is thorough recording and follow-up to any incidents that occur
- staff are suitably trained and able to seek advice and support when required
- leaders and the governing body are effective in monitoring and evaluating policy and practice for behaviour management and safeguarding students within the school.

## **Evidence**

I checked the single central record of checks on staff, and other documents relating to safeguarding students and child protection arrangements, including behaviour and bullying records. I observed behaviour in a range of lessons and at various times across the school day. I met staff and students and had telephone conversations with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. As part of the inspection, I also checked attendance information, minutes of governing body meetings and reviewed the programmes of lessons, including those that teach students about personal and social development. The 33 responses on Parent View were also considered as part of my evidence.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school's safeguarding procedures and policies meet requirements.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour is good. Most students have positive attitudes to learning in lessons, listen respectfully to their teachers and classmates and are keen to get involved in discussions. Class teachers and leaders responsible for the well-being of students work well together to ensure good behaviour. Sensible behaviour in the playground and canteen contribute to the orderly atmosphere of the school. Many, but not all, students follow the school rule of walking on the left in the corridors and on stairs. Students say that when this does not happen, it is frustrating.

Every student I spoke to during the inspection said that they felt safe in school. This is because of the pleasant and friendly atmosphere, the good level of staff supervision outside at break times and knowing that if there are any problems in school, there is someone they could talk to. Students understand about different forms of bullying and the importance of being respectful to each other because of the work they do in 'Life Skills', religious education and other lessons, as well as in assemblies. Some students say that they have experienced others being unkind; however, this had been dealt with well by teachers and leaders who do not tolerate bullying. The re-introduction of the FABs (Friends Against Bullying) initiative involving students from all year groups and the Friendly Ear Room, where sixth-form students are on hand to listen to and help younger students, are welcomed by students.

Attendance continues to be above average, with fewer students persistently absent from school than is the case nationally. The number of students who are excluded from school because of poor behaviour is lower than the national average.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The school's aim to 'to guide and encourage students to be responsible, caring and confident' is at the heart of the approach to safeguarding students. All staff and

governors are very aware of their duties in this respect and take these seriously. Students appreciate this good leadership and it contributes to them feeling safe.

Senior leaders responsible for safeguarding students take great care to make sure that safeguarding procedures are known by all staff and volunteers working at the school. Advanced training for key members of staff and governors is up to date. All of this means that action is taken quickly when any concerns are raised.

The school has an appropriate range of policies that set out actions to help keep students safe. These are well understood by teachers and governors and followed when necessary. School leaders are working towards a locally recognised anti-bullying award. A very recent review of the anti-bullying policy by the local authority has identified how the policy and the school's work in this area can be strengthened further. This includes senior leaders attending specialist training and detailing the names of the members of staff that parents should contact if they have concerns.

Careful records are kept of incidents of bullying and these, as well as other information relating to students' behaviour and safety, are regularly reviewed by governors. I agree with senior leaders' plans for the need to make clearer records of the actions taken as a result of any bullying incidents. This will then support the current work of making changes to approaches if they are not working.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Make sure that all staff encourage students to follow the school's expectations of behaviour at all times, particularly when moving along corridors and on stairs.
- Make clearer records of the actions taken after incidents of bullying to help identify changes when approaches are not working.
- Continue to work with the local authority to achieve the local anti-bullying award, including attending specialist training and including the names of key members of staff on contact information to parents.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Walsall and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**