

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



29 January 2016

Ms Clare Hayes
Headteacher
St John Fisher and Thomas More Roman Catholic High School
Gibfield Road
Colne
Lancashire
BB8 8JT

Dear Ms Hayes

Short inspection of St John Fisher and Thomas More Roman Catholic High School, Colne

Following my visit to the school on 14 January 2016 with Sue Lomas, 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been many staff changes, including your appointment as headteacher. Changes have also been made to the senior leadership team and the English department.

'Let your bright colours shine' is your mantra. You have an ambitious vision to make this an outstanding school by continually raising expectations. You are building on the strengths within your leadership team to drive improvements at an even faster pace. You have an unflinching focus upon high standards for all pupils.

This is a caring school. Leaders and governors are very aware of the diverse community they serve and welcome pupils of all faiths and those of none to join 'Family Fisher More'. Every pupil who joins the school writes their name on a ribbon and ties it to the 'Fisher More fishing net' in the Chapel, symbolising your sense of togetherness. This sense of community is apparent in the life of the school.

Leaders and managers have been highly self-critical since the previous inspection and, as a result, are better placed to help pupils achieve. The governing body has re-structured, undertaken training with the school improvement partner and is now much more effective. Middle leaders are having a greater impact through more careful monitoring and tracking.

Members of the governing body are more confident and assured in their roles. They have a very clear vision for the school, which is shared by leaders at all levels. One governor expressed their ethos as 'compassion care and mercy: dreaming big and aiming high'.

You have re-organised the senior leadership team temporarily, but rightly recognise that the team needs refinement to help you move forward with your ambitious plans. You and the governing body will not accept staff whose work is not good enough for the pupils you serve; you have effectively tackled some underperformance.

Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has continued to improve because most teachers now use their knowledge of students' abilities and needs to plan their lessons. This was exemplified in a Year 10 mathematics lesson where pupils with low attainment on entry to the school were observed making rapid progress resulting from the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and personable demeanour. Their highly skilled teacher created a classroom climate where pupils felt safe to make mistakes and 'have a go'. This is typical of the quality of teaching that senior leaders find through their monitoring.

Pupils continue to make good progress across a range of subjects, and gaps in the progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are beginning to close. Attendance is high and well above average for the majority of pupils. For pupils who are disadvantaged, attendance is below average but there are signs of improvement, for example in Year 9. A more strategic approach has been taken to the spending of pupil premium funds, which is helpful, although this is not evaluated thoroughly enough.

Pupils feel that there are more opportunities for their voices to be heard through the school council, and prefects welcome more responsibility in their roles as school ambassadors.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school makes thorough checks on all staff when they are recruited. There are robust risk assessments for the school site, and the procedures for pupils leaving school at the end of the day are well planned and supervised. Procedures around safeguarding, anti-bullying and child-protection are effective.

The governing body is currently reviewing all policies to ensure that they reflect the school's practice. Referrals to ensure child protection are made in a timely manner. Staff regularly undertake child protection training and are clear about their responsibilities to report any concerns.

Inspection findings

- Pupils spoken to by inspectors feel that behaviour is good. This view is echoed by teachers, welfare staff and the very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View. Typically, pupils are polite, well-mannered and show great respect for the staff. There is a very small minority of pupils whose attitudes are not as positive in lessons and, on occasion, they interrupt the learning of others.
- Pastoral care is strong. All pupils spoken to by inspectors say that they feel safe in school and appreciate the extensive work of the pastoral staff, who work relentlessly to put the needs of pupils first. Leaders successfully changed the curriculum for a number of pupils who were at risk of permanent exclusion. The pupils spent part of their time on Prince's Trust activities and at college. This helped them secure apprenticeships, college places or jobs.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare; when it happens it is usually name-calling and it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are confident to report bullying and inspectors found it was being recorded. However, the school's policy is unclear for parents and pupils about how to formally report bullying and what to do if bullying recurs. A very few parents expressed a concern that when bullying had occurred, they had not been told quickly enough about how it was being addressed.
- Pupils were observed learning well in art, modern foreign languages, English, mathematics, science and religious education. However, in geography and technology pupils were not fully engaged in their learning, either because expectations were too low and the work was too simple or because they were unable to understand the language used in the lesson because it was too complicated.
- There is some excellent feedback in books that is clear, simple and incisive. However, not all books are marked according to the school's policy, leaving some pupils without a clear direction of how their work can be improved.
- Strong social, moral, spiritual and cultural education permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils spoken to by inspectors had a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities as British citizens and spoke confidently about current affairs, such as the junior doctors' strike. In religious education pupils were visibly touched by a short film about random acts of kindness.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the remaining gaps in attendance and progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closed
- all policies and records reflect the school's practice
- communication with parents and carers is strengthened.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Salford, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We held discussions with you, the chaplain, your senior leadership team, middle leaders, members of the governing body, your school improvement partner, teachers, welfare staff, support staff, local police and over 30 pupils. We considered 50 responses to the staff questionnaire and took account of 57 responses on Parent View. We scrutinised information around self-evaluation, school improvement planning, attendance, safeguarding, behaviour, progress and lesson planning. We made short visits to lessons, spent time listening to pupils read and observed pupils, who were new to speaking English, being taught in the student support centre.