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Miss Jane Byrne
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Byrne

Short inspection of Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School

Following my visit to the school on 19 January 2016 with Nigel Griffiths, 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 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Most of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report have been tackled successfully and work continues on areas you correctly identify as needing development. For example, you have introduced strategies to close the learning and achievement gap between pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils in the school and nationally. School leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and keen to raise standards further. Your strong leadership is ensuring that the recent drop in GCSE results, particularly in mathematics, is being resolved through a range of well-focused strategies to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment.

Improving the quality of teaching is central to the school's work. You and other leaders make frequent checks on the performance of pupils and teachers. The information from the checks enables you to pinpoint effective practice and where further improvements are needed. There is a well-thought-out programme of training and support for teachers that focuses on individual and whole-school priorities. The majority of subject leaders know their departments well and lead improvements effectively.

The sixth form is popular and provides a suitable variety of courses and enrichment opportunities. The leader of the sixth form is passionate about improving outcomes as well as learners' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. As a result, an increasing number of learners are going on to top universities or successfully securing employment or training places.

Since the last inspection, you have formalised your links with six partner Catholic primary schools. You use these associations to smooth the transfer from primary to secondary school and to make sure approaches to pupils' learning and pastoral care are consistent. You also have links with a number of local secondary schools. These relationships are used to provide school-to-school support and to broaden the number of subjects on offer to Bishop Ullathorne learners.

A strong sense of care and nurture permeates the life of the school. Pupils' social, emotional and academic growth is central to your vision. You are well supported by leaders, staff and governors in realising the school's aim 'to be an active and Christian community of love and service where all feel they belong and are valued'. Parents, pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's online surveys are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school and the way that it is led. The vast majority are confident that children are happy, safe, well taught and making progress.

The vast majority of pupils enjoy their time at the school. This is reflected in attendance rates that are improving and in line with national figures and in the calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school and in lessons. Pupils move calmly around the school site and buildings and show respect towards each other and towards staff and visitors. Almost all of the pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they enjoy coming to school and appreciate the opportunities the school offers them. They spoke glowingly of the support they receive from teachers, older pupils or 'buddies', and pastoral managers.

Members of the governing body are ambitious for the pupils and determined to improve the school further so that it becomes outstanding. They know the school well and have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. For example, governors are aware that some of the school's policies and practices need tightening up so that they fully reflect current government guidelines.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors make sure that systems and procedures are in place to ensure pupils feel safe and are safe from harm. You and the governing body attach the highest priority to this aspect of the school's work. All staff have been appropriately trained in child protection and safeguarding issues. As a result, all staff understand their safeguarding duties.

You make sure that pupils understand the potential risks and dangers associated with, for example, substance misuse and the use of social media, through careers, personal, social and health education lessons and assemblies. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and that bullying issues are quickly and effectively resolved.

A number of leaders and governors have completed safer recruitment training. As a result, the vetting checks on staff are thorough and rigorous.

Inspection findings

- You, your leadership team and governors set high expectations of staff and pupils. You create a calm and purposeful climate in which the majority of pupils thrive and flourish throughout the school, including in the sixth form.
- The quality of learning, teaching and assessment has been sustained since the last inspection, especially in English, history and religious education. You recognise that the quality of assessment and feedback to pupils in Key Stage 3 is less effective in some subjects, for example in science and mathematics. You are tackling these inconsistencies and there are signs that pupils' learning is improving as a result.
- At times, the agreed procedures for teaching and providing feedback are not applied consistently by all staff. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress expected of them or quickly consolidate or develop their knowledge and understanding.
- In mathematics, a new head of department has raised expectations and is developing the quality of teaching and learning. She recognises that pupils' learning in the past was done by rote and that there were few opportunities for pupils to reason mathematically, solve increasingly difficult problems or to use and apply their arithmetical knowledge and skills fluently. Increased opportunities for the pupils to do these things are resulting in improved standards in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 3.
- Leaders are quick to recognise and tackle weaknesses. For example, the below-average attendance of pupils with special educational needs was quickly recognised and action plans speedily implemented. As a result, the attendance of these pupils has improved and is now in line with the levels of attendance across the school.
- All staff model appropriate behaviour. Pupils' conduct around the school site and in lessons leads to a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Disruptions to learning are kept to a minimum. The vast majority of pupils are polite, courteous, thoughtful and considerate. The numbers of fixed-term and permanent exclusions are consistently low and below national figures. However, where learning is less effective, teachers do not demand that all pupils present and complete their work to the best of their ability. As a result, the quality and quantity of a few pupils' work are not good enough.

- Pupils feel safe and are happy at the school. They feel they can share concerns with staff and that these concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with effectively. The school ensures that pupils are taught how to keep safe through lessons and assemblies. The school offers pupils opportunities to consider and understand the local community and the wider world. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training at the end of both Year 11 and Year 13.
- Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 remains strong, with the majority of pupils doing well in English, English literature, geography, history and science. Leaders recognise that pupils' outcomes are variable in Key Stage 3, due primarily to inconsistencies in the quality of assessment and feedback, for example in science and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors recognise that the achievement gap between pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils in school and nationally was unacceptable. You have taken effective action to narrow this gap. Information provided by the school shows that the disparity between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils currently in the school is decreasing.
- The sixth form meets the 16 to 19 study programme requirements. Leaders focus on ensuring that learners develop academically, socially and emotionally. They receive high-quality support and guidance and benefit from a range of enrichment opportunities, including work experience. The progress and attendance of learners following courses at other schools are monitored effectively, so that underperformance is quickly identified and tackled.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the pupils and communicate high expectations and aspirations to pupils, staff and parents. Subject and pastoral leaders make frequent checks on teachers' and pupils' performance. However, the information from these checks is not used consistently to put in place actions that make the most difference to pupils. The strategic plans to raise standards are not always focused on what works best for pupils at Bishop Ullathorne.
- Governors are highly supportive of the school and have a good understanding of the quality and impact of learning and teaching. However, they do not ensure that all statutory policies and procedures meet government guidelines. For example, the school's special educational needs policy does not fully reflect the Department for Education's *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years* (2015).

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teaching matches the best practice that exists in the school
- assessment and feedback in lessons and in pupils' books are in line with the school's own policy and help pupils to improve the quality and quantity of their work and develop their knowledge and understanding

- all pupils in mathematics have the opportunity to reason, solve increasingly difficult problems and develop their ability to use and apply their knowledge and skills confidently
- the achievement gap between pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils in school and nationally continues to reduce
- leaders refine the way information is used to measure the impact of actions and interventions to raise pupils' standards
- all statutory policies and procedures follow current guidelines.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, inspectors were able to discuss the work of the school with you, your leadership team and other staff. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in classes in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour, attendance, how they learn how to keep themselves safe and about what it feels like to be a member of the Bishop Ullathorne community. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they arrived at school, during an assembly, at breaks and lunchtime as well as in lessons. Discussions with four school governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, helped to provide additional information. Inspectors looked at a range of school documents including the vetting checks on staff, the minutes of governors' meetings and the school's information about pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's pupil, parent and staff questionnaires.