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10 February 2016

Ms Sally Walker
Headteacher
Connaught School for Girls
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Dear Ms Walker

Short inspection of Connaught School for Girls

Following my visit to the school on 20 January 2016 with Andy Phillips, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you joined the school in September 2014, you have set about ensuring that the school focuses on maintaining its strengths. You are introducing improvements where needed. You, together with governors and the senior leadership team, have a very accurate understanding of the school and you use this to identify strengths and priorities.

Pupils enjoy coming to Connaught School for Girls. The school is a friendly and welcoming place to be. As a result, pupils' attendance is high. Pupils are proud of their school and its diversity. The school has a strong community spirit which is enhanced by the many extra-curricular activities on offer. Staff encourage pupils to be confident and aware of the world around them. Pupils appreciate the pastoral support that is provided. They feel safe and know whom to go to if they need support. Leaders think carefully about what to include in the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme so that it is relevant and worthwhile. The citizenship programme and thought-provoking corridor displays promote pupils' understanding of these areas. Pupils get on well with their teachers and would recommend the school to prospective parents.

The quality of teaching and assessment remains good because teachers plan stimulating and enjoyable lessons which help pupils learn. As a result, pupils make good progress in almost all subjects and do well in their GCSE examinations. GCSE results are above national averages and disadvantaged pupils do very well compared with other pupils nationally. The curriculum focuses on academic subjects at GCSE and provides opportunities for the most-able pupils to be challenged through accelerated programmes in modern foreign languages and science. Teachers generally give clear and helpful feedback to pupils on their work, although some teachers do not do so as effectively as the best.

The behaviour of pupils is also a strength of the school. Pupils are polite and aware of the importance of behaving well. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare and have decreased in the past year because leaders set clear expectations and follow up any issues firmly and fairly.

Since the last inspection, the school has continued to focus on the areas identified for improvement. The school has made good progress in these areas and you openly reflect that there is further work to be done. You have accelerated this process since becoming headteacher. You have appointed senior leaders who share your vision for the school and who implement effective strategies to achieve it effectively. For example, a coherent focus on teaching and learning has been introduced and teachers are better able to share good practice and learn from each other. Senior leaders have a collaborative working style and consult staff on changes, with working parties guiding new initiatives. As a result, projects such as the new progress-tracking system are clearly understood by staff, and welcomed.

You are continuing the focus on developing the quality of middle leadership as part of your drive to ensure the very best outcomes for pupils. Senior leaders ensure that middle leaders increasingly focus on the progress of pupils and groups of pupils through regular line management meetings.

Your evaluation of the school's current performance is accurate and honest. Strategic planning is in place and the priorities are clear. However, plans lack sufficient focus on identifying the impact that actions will have for pupils and their outcomes. You accept that clearly identifying the difference that you expect to see is a priority, so that you and governors will be able to monitor progress accurately.

You also consider a priority to be the continuing development of the quality of middle leadership in the school. You have identified the central role that middle leaders have in driving improvement. You aim to strengthen the role and accountabilities of middle leaders to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment improves so that pupils achieve well in all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and references the latest guidance from the Secretary of State. The school has clear procedures for reporting any issues that arise. Pre-appointment checks are made for new employees and the single central record accurately records these in detail. Staff receive relevant training regularly. Senior leaders create a culture that promotes safety and safety awareness. For example, they use assemblies effectively to raise awareness of risk. Pupils report that they feel very safe at school and know whom to speak to if they need to.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and governors work closely together to evaluate the school's performance based on up-to-date information about the progress of pupils. Their evaluation is accurate and detailed. They identify whether particular groups of pupils are not achieving as well as others in the school. As a result, the priorities for further improvement are clear. Governors have improved their knowledge of the school because you encourage other leaders to attend governors' meetings and give presentations.
- Senior leaders are accurate in their assessment of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They identify what teachers do to promote learning and where teaching is less effective. They regularly look at the work in pupils' books and give helpful feedback to heads of department. Senior leaders accurately identify that in some lessons, and particularly in Key Stage 3, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for the most-able pupils and marking does always not support pupils to make progress.
- The school's assessment information shows that, overall, pupils continue to make good progress. However, some groups, for example the most-able disadvantaged pupils, do not do as well as others in the school and pupils' progress in mathematics is not as strong as in other subjects. Senior leaders identify that taking action to address these areas is a priority. The school sets aspirational targets for pupils. A robust system has recently been introduced to assess how well pupils are doing against their targets. Leaders analyse this information regularly. Assessment information is reported to parents regularly, with clear guidance on what it means. Leaders are developing this information so that it can be used to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils in all year groups.
- Parents are positive about the school. Staff work closely with parents, for example by offering parent workshops. Parents are encouraged to give feedback to the school through regular parents' surveys. Parent consultation evenings are very well attended. Parents receive accurate feedback on their daughters' progress and well-being and feel that the school is very supportive.

- Pupils are also very positive about the school. They say that teachers are helpful and care about them as individuals. They say that any bullying is taken very seriously, is not tolerated and that the slightest incident is dealt with effectively by senior leaders and heads of year. As a result, incidents of bullying are rare. Older pupils are positive about the careers advice they receive and appreciate the individual meeting they have with the careers adviser.
- Middle leaders work with increasing consistency to promote good outcomes for pupils. For example, newly introduced line management meetings with senior leaders follow set agendas that focus on pupils' progress. As a result, middle leaders have a clearer understanding of which groups of pupils need more support and what action to take.
- The school's citizenship and pastoral programmes are a strength of the school. Pupils feel that the topics covered, such as internet awareness, are directly relevant to them.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategic planning identifies the intended impact of planned actions on pupil progress and outcomes so that improvements can be monitored accurately
- middle leaders effectively monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their departments so that all pupils, including the most-able pupils, experience teaching that challenges them to make good or better progress in all subjects and across both key stages
- senior leaders continue to provide support and challenge to the mathematics department so that pupils make accelerated progress in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for London borough of Waltham Forest. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Ward
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. I met with six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors visited seven lessons jointly with senior leaders and looked at work in pupils' books. We had meetings with middle leaders, staff and pupils from all year groups, and talked informally to pupils at break- and lunchtime. I evaluated the school's most recent information relating to pupils' progress, the curriculum and the school's self-evaluation and strategic planning documents. We also scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, admissions and attendance and minutes of governing body meetings. I also evaluated the responses of 32 parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View.