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Mrs Maureen Williams
Headteacher
La Sainte Union Catholic Secondary School
Highgate Road
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Dear Mrs Williams

Short inspection of La Sainte Union Catholic Secondary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 February 2016 with Andrew Cooper, 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

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

You, other senior leaders and the governing body have very high aspirations for your pupils and a clear vision for the school. You have created an ethos where the school's values of tolerance, respect and compassion permeate throughout the curriculum. As a result, your pupils thrive academically, spiritually, socially and emotionally. You, your staff and the pupils are rightfully proud of the beautiful and large school site which encourages a culture of calm and reflection. The multitude of musical and cultural activities running throughout the day adds to the purposeful learning environment.

You know the school's strengths and have accurately identified the areas that need to be further developed in order to maintain the high standards you expect. You have made many significant improvements since the previous inspection in November 2010. In some areas, particularly the sixth form, these improvements are ongoing. Your determination to continually improve provision at the school and the effective support of your governing body means that your actions have had a very positive impact on the progress made by pupils.

The school is popular and oversubscribed. The majority of pupils arrive with attainment that is much higher than the national average; they are keen to do well and work hard. They respect each other's differences in this culturally diverse school and work harmoniously together. Both pupils and their teachers have high

aspirations for their achievements, both culturally and academically. Pupils behave well, and are courteous and polite.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff are well trained to identify safeguarding concerns. They understand issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM), child sexual exploitation, and protecting young people from extremism and radicalisation. They understand the procedures and policies for referring concerns relating to pupils' well-being. Well-trained, designated school officers work closely with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. The school's record-keeping in relation to the safer recruitment of new staff is robust.

Pupils feel safe at school and attend regularly. They are given regular opportunities to discuss issues that might affect them, for instance bullying. They know who to turn to should they have any concerns and are confident that any problems will be dealt with quickly by staff. School leaders have in place a comprehensive support programme for all pupils, including learners in the sixth form. This ensures that specific problems, for instance health concerns, can be dealt with effectively. Sixth form learners are involved in an innovative project whereby they are trained to deliver lessons on mental well-being. Staff quickly identify potential problems, such as low self-esteem, and are quick to provide support. Extra-curricular activities are organised to develop pupils' self-confidence.

The parents who responded to the online survey Parent View strongly endorse the inspectors' views.

Inspection findings

- The headteacher, other school leaders and the governing body are an experienced and committed group. They work closely and effectively together to sustain the high standard of education they provide for the pupils.
- The induction of new, competent middle leaders has increased the capacity of the senior leadership team to deliver further school improvements.
- A focus on increasing pupils' ability to become more independent learners, and provide activities that suit individual learning styles, has begun to have an impact on the accelerated progress pupils make.
- The school actively promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, both in the main school and in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities are varied and interesting. Participation rates are high and pupils are given every opportunity to explore new interests and develop skills that will prepare them for life in modern Britain. The school council across all key stages is well regarded and gives pupils leadership opportunities.
- The local authority works closely with school leaders to support the school as it broadens its links, including international ones. School leaders are currently working with a school in China to share their expertise and skills.

- Pupils arrive with levels of attainment that are well above average. They make very good progress across a range of subjects, particularly at Key Stage 4, and over two thirds attain five GCSEs A* to C including English and mathematics. Current information provided by the school indicates that this high rate of progress will continue. Most notable is the progress made by pupils in English, which far exceeds the national average.
- Within the context of the school's results, progress in mathematics and science has been less strong than in other areas. While pupils make progress which is above the national average in these subjects, they do not make the same accelerated progress seen elsewhere in the curriculum. Strategies are now in place to address this.
- New leadership of the inclusive sixth form is already proving to be strong. The large sixth form is part of the 'LaSwap' consortium and is, therefore, able to offer a range of courses based across the four providers. Just over half of Year 11 pupils stay to pursue courses in the sixth form. They are provided with an extensive support package to ensure that both their academic and their social and emotional needs are met. This is a strength of the sixth form offer at the school.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance has improved over time and is now good. Raising the admissions criteria, and summer preparation activities, ensures that more learners are successful on their chosen post-16 courses. Equally, a high number of learners go on to study at their first-choice university or attain places on apprenticeships.
- Able learners achieve high results in their chosen subjects, particularly at AS level. However, progress for learners in the sixth form on academic courses does not yet reflect the high levels of progress made by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4. School leaders are working hard to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is consistently strong across all subject areas.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is beginning to develop under the new leadership of this area. The introduction of learner profiles and a more robust system for identifying those pupils who need to be included on the SEN register is having a positive impact on the progress this group make. An increased focus on improving their social and emotional skills has meant that attendance for some has begun to improve. While there is still a gap between this group and their peers, it is closing.
- Disadvantaged pupils consistently make better progress than other pupils nationally in English and in line with other pupils at the school. However, in mathematics in 2015, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally and their peers at the school. While gaps are beginning to close, school leaders are aware that this is still an area requiring further focus. Pupil premium funding is used to target specific initiatives at this group and leaders carefully check that individuals are making appropriate progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on improvements in the sixth form, so that learners make the same rapid progress as pupils in the main school
- pupils and groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make accelerated progress across all subject areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, other senior leaders and teachers. They met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a staff governor. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, information on the progress of current pupils and the single central record. Inspectors interviewed one group of pupils and spoke to other pupils informally at other times during the inspection. Inspectors visited lessons in mathematics to gather evidence on particular strands of teaching, learning and assessment.