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Simon Murphy
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Murphy

Short inspection of Bishop Justus CofE School

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 2016 with Joan Deslandes, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have continued to maintain an accurate understanding of the school, which has supported continuous improvement, particularly in the sixth form. Your self-evaluation is precise in identifying areas of strength. Leaders and governors are tenacious in their efforts to monitor whole-school performance, implementing effective strategies which have secured rapid improvements. The Aquinas Church of England Education Trust closely scrutinises the school's progress and stringently holds leaders and governors to account. Consequently, improvements made since the last inspection are secure.

Leaders and governors have focused sharply upon addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, while maintaining the high standards of conduct and welfare that form a part of their fundamental expectations. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has strengthened and outcomes for groups of pupils, particularly for boys and disadvantaged pupils, have improved. The sixth form is very popular and learners feel highly supported by staff. Learners achieve results that prepare them effectively for their subsequent education, training and employment. They receive guidance that matches their high ambitions.

You have worked closely with members of the academy trust in order to identify areas for further development. You have implemented effective strategies to secure swift improvements. For example, leaders have developed an assessment system that accurately monitors progress and identifies where pupils need additional help. Consequently, pupils make good progress from their starting points, and those who require it receive individualised programmes of support.

Leaders have aligned the school's performance management and appraisal system so that teachers are recognised for the impact their teaching has on pupils' outcomes. Leaders identify underperformance quickly and they work collaboratively with teachers to improve their performance. The standard of teaching, learning and assessment is strong as staff share your ethos of focusing upon individual pupils and improving performance through teamwork. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in the majority of subjects as a result, particularly in humanities and modern foreign languages in key stage 4. While historically there is some variation in pupils' progress across the school, particularly in science, leaders are taking prompt and effective action to ensure variations are reduced.

Work with primary schools within the academy trust, including support for pupils when they move to secondary school, has increased expectations of pupils joining your school in Year 7. Consequently, lower ability and the most-able pupils are challenged appropriately in key stage 3. Lower attaining pupils are well supported to develop their literacy and numeracy through dedicated support in lessons. The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and provides a breadth of experience and skills including additional language lessons for the most able.

The school's most recent assessment information indicates that outcomes for pupils are strong. The progress being made by the most-able pupils is rapid, leading to impressive examination outcomes. The gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has closed in recent years and leaders have the continued closure of this gap as a key target. Current assessment information indicates that disadvantaged pupils continue to exceed national averages for attainment and achievement, but the gap within school remains as before. Boys and girls continue to achieve equally well, including in the 16 to 19 study programmes.

Pupils are welcoming and polite. During the inspection, they spoke highly of the support that they receive from staff in lessons and through extra-curricular activities. The school environment is bright, clean and inviting. Staff and pupils take pride in the school, which fosters positive attitudes to learning. The school's behaviour policy is clear and consistently applied by all staff. Where fixed-term exclusions are used, they are given as a last resort. Leaders increasingly use alternatives to exclusion, including strategies to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability.

The provision of 16 to 19 study programmes in the sixth form is an area of considerable strength. Leaders have a firm grasp on the progress learners make across all subjects and act rapidly to support learners who are at risk of underachieving. Learners receive carefully planned careers advice and guidance when joining the sixth form and when considering their subsequent education,

training and employment. Consequently, the majority of learners who apply to university gain a place on their first choice of courses. Those seeking work-related opportunities told inspectors that they feel well supported when considering apprenticeships. Outcomes in the sixth form have improved rapidly and current assessment information indicates that learners make strong progress, particularly in history.

Leaders recognise that there are areas for further development. They have identified that where the standard of teaching, learning and assessment is less consistently good, such as in science, outcomes for pupils are weaker. Leaders have taken prompt actions to address this. The impact of those actions is beginning to be seen in some improved outcomes for pupils. Where the school's policy for assessment is used well by teachers, pupils' progress is accelerated across year groups and subjects. However, this is not consistent across all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements for safeguarding are secure and effective. Staff and governors take collective responsibility for ensuring that pupils are safe, placing safeguarding and the well-being of individuals at the heart of the school's work. The single central record for keeping details of checks made on staff meets statutory requirements. Staff receive regular training on issues including child neglect, the Prevent duty and keeping safe online. Consequently, staff know and apply procedures accurately and work closely with external agencies when appropriate.

The vast majority of parents who gave their views via Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agree that their children are well cared for. Pupils consider issues around bullying, radicalisation and staying safe online during tutor time and in assemblies. As a result, they know whom to go to with concerns and feel confident that they are listened to. Pupils told inspectors that the school feels safe.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, you have improved the standard of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly for the most able. Leaders and governors continue to raise expectations for outcomes for the most-able pupils, resulting in stronger teaching and learning for this group. Teachers increasingly plan lessons that meet the needs of the most-able pupils more accurately than in the past. The progress made by the most-able pupils is strong in many subjects.
- Your evaluation of the school is accurate. You use governors and trust members to check your self-evaluation. They know the school's strengths in promoting pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, and in maintaining high expectations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders utilise established relationships with the local teacher training provider, the Bromley Schools' Collegiate, to recruit strong teachers and then develop them through in-house and trust-wide programmes, such as middle leadership development.

- Teachers plan activities to take account of individuals' needs, particularly those of pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Teachers deploy support staff skilfully in lessons. Where teachers challenge pupils through questioning that matches pupils' ability, learning is accelerated. While there remains variation in the impact of this school-wide approach, leaders are able to identify and support teachers to improve. As a result, the quality of teaching continues to improve.
- The curriculum is planned to meet the needs of most pupils from their starting points when they join the school. This is supported by collaborative links with primary schools.
- In some subjects at key stage 4, most notably science, pupils do not make the same impressive gains as they do in key stage 3 and in the sixth form. You are aware of the impact this has on different groups of pupils and your plans and actions to date are making necessary improvements.
- Learners on the 16 to 19 study programmes make good progress. The school's current assessment information shows that learners make rapid progress in Year 12 and Year 13. Most learners who are studying GCSE English in Year 12 have already achieved at least a grade C, while the school's current assessment information indicates that those studying GCSE mathematics are making good progress towards achieving pass grades in the summer. Information, advice and guidance, including the career-ready programme and careers email bulletins, prepare learners well when making decisions. Learners take opportunities to support school leaders as prefects and relish the chance to act as role models to younger pupils, for example by supporting Year 7 pupils in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils continue to make progress and attain outcomes increasingly in line with their peers in school, and exceed national averages. In 2015, the gap in achievement in English and mathematics closed markedly compared with the previous year due to targeted intervention and attendance support for this group. Current assessment information indicates that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than their peers nationally, although progress seen in books is variable. Leaders are exploring strategies to ensure that support for disadvantaged pupils is further developed.
- Outcomes in GCSE science dipped considerably in 2014. Leaders have taken prompt action to improve teaching in science and their actions are beginning to have an impact.
- Leaders have implemented strategies that support the needs of pupils who have special educational needs or disability well. The deployment of support staff in lessons is a particular strength and teachers plan for pupils' needs based on their starting points. Learners on 16 to 19 study programmes who have special educational needs or disability make good progress on suitably challenging courses.
- Governors are strident in holding the school's leaders to account through regular reporting that focuses upon pupils' progress and improvement against the school's development plans. The academy trust thoroughly checks the work of school leaders and governors. Trust members and governors are focused in their pursuit of excellence so that individual outcomes are as good as they can be. They set you, as headteacher, clear performance targets that focus squarely upon progress against the school's plans for development.

- Pupils' personal development forms the core of the school's ethos and planning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for. Inspectors spoke to a number of the school's community and received feedback from parents that reiterated the manner and success with which the school prepares pupils for their later life and ensures their well-being. During informal conversations, pupils told inspectors that they know the school cares about them. Learners who act as mentors to younger pupils reiterated the point when discussing their role as being akin to an elder sibling whom pupils could turn to for advice.
- Pupils' desire to learn was evident in most observations of learning by inspectors and the standard of presentation in books was very high, particularly in the sixth form. Pupils, and learners in the sixth form, spoke highly of the subject support that they receive from school staff and explained to inspectors that their confidence improves as a result. The school achieved the Investor in Careers Award in June 2015, reflecting the school's commitment to pupils' development beyond school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching, learning and assessment are at least consistently good or better across all key stages
- achievement is consistently high across all subjects, particularly in science.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust, the director of education for the diocese of Rochester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the London borough of Bromley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, senior and middle leaders, teachers and support staff, including those responsible for safeguarding. They also met with two representatives from the academy trust including the chief executive officer, the chair of the governing body and one other member, and pupils both formally and informally.

Inspectors visited a number of lessons jointly with members from your senior leadership team and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information, and the school's evaluation of its own performance and development planning. Records about keeping pupils safe were evaluated.