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31 October 2016

Mrs Yvonne Connolly  
Headteacher  
St Catherine's Catholic School  
Watling Street  
Bexleyheath  
Kent  
DA6 7QJ

Dear Mrs Connolly

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Catherine's Catholic School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 September 2016 with Karla Martin-Theodore, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss behaviour in your school.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about a recent incident in the wider community, in which some pupils attending the school were allegedly involved.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussion with pupils
- documentary evidence
- discussions with school leaders and staff, members of the governing body, representatives from the archdiocese and local authority, and a few parents.

Having evaluated the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time: Leaders and managers have taken effective action to maintain the good standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

## **Context**

St Catherine's Catholic School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. Two-thirds of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (the additional funding to support looked after children and pupils eligible for free school meals) is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average, as is the proportion who have a statement of special needs or an education, health and care plan.

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher was appointed to lead the school. The appointment was taken up at the start of the current academic year.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils at St Catherine's live by the school's mission statement by demonstrating mutual love and respect as well as consideration for each other. Within this diverse community, pupils get on very well together; friendship groups embrace each other's cultural heritage. Pupils see their school as a strong community that helps them to make friends quickly. As a diverse and inclusive community, pupils say that group activities, such as the school and gospel choirs, provide them with good opportunities to develop their relationships. Pupils' respect for each other extends to visitors and the community.

Pupils usually conduct themselves well in lessons and during social times. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The vast majority of pupils arrive to lessons on time, well equipped and ready to begin working. They take pride in their work and their appearance, and are proud to be a part of the school. Some pupils say that the school's rules are too strict, including the ban on mobile phones. However, they acknowledge that the school is moulding them for the world of work, including learning how to take responsibility for their actions.

In lessons, most pupils are positive about their learning and demonstrate good levels of discipline. Occasionally, a few pupils present challenging behaviour which pupils say disrupts teaching and learning. However, such misbehaviour is not tolerated and pupils, as well as facing the consequences, are given the help and support to change their ways. Pupils usually concentrate well, show a thirst for learning and do not shy away from taking part in discussions or asking questions. Pupils are keen to achieve well and are ambitious to realise their dreams to enter university, and contribute to their community and wider afield.

Pupils understand different forms of bullying and say that, if it occurs, staff deal with it quickly and decisively. Parents spoken to agree and pointed out that the good behaviour of pupils is a key factor to the school sustaining high results. Prejudice-based behaviour is rare.

Fixed-term exclusions are below average and, when they occur, are linked to unacceptable behaviour outside of school. The school deals effectively with poor behaviour, particularly as it does not accord with the school's ethos. Some pupils say that punishment can be punitive and inconsistent. This is because not all teachers apply the behaviour policy accurately all the time. Pupils wish to see teachers being consistent at all times. Rates of fixed-term exclusions are higher for pupils of African and Caribbean heritage than they are for other groups of pupils in the school. This has led to these groups of pupils believing that they are not treated fairly, and they would wish to have senior leaders listen more to their views. The governing body have not critically analysed the behaviour patterns for these pupils in relation to the Equality Act 2010. Neither have leaders identified next steps to reduce the disproportionate exclusions for these groups. While school leaders listen to pupils' viewpoints, they agree that more could be done to show pupils that their views have been heard even if they are not always agreed with.

Effective partnerships with external agencies such as the behaviour support team contributes to reducing the risk of exclusions. The school reports that regular evaluation of behaviour action plans and parental involvement have had a significant impact on reducing exclusions. For example, pupils who have been excluded now act as role models and ambassadors for the school. Collaborative work with external agencies such as social care, and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) support pupils in managing their behaviour and overcoming barriers such as mental health issues.

Pupils aspiring to become leaders take on leadership roles. They begin to develop skills as prefects, mentors and representatives on the school council. Pupils in leadership positions are articulate; they speak out for and on behalf of others, as well as provide guidance and support for those requiring a helping hand.

The school guards its reputation in the community. Members of staff take care to protect pupils. They prioritise a visible presence when pupils walk into the town centre after school, ensuring that they go home straight away. The school initially banned pupils from shopping in the town centre during the last academic year to prevent them getting into trouble. The ban has been reinforced since the start of the current academic year because of a recent serious disturbance in the area. Some pupils, including the school council, have tried to influence school leaders to lift the ban. Although they understand the reasons for it, they believe that all pupils should be trusted to behave sensibly. Not all pupils feel that staff listen well enough to them on matters of behaviour and conduct.

The school is proactive in using its good partnership work with a range of external agencies, such as the police, to provide support for pupils with behaviour difficulties. These partnerships also provide the school with information on matters relating to disorder in the locality. Following the recent serious disturbance in the local area, school leaders have begun to attend formal meetings with the police and other local schools to share and develop information. The school has taken full advantage of its links with Transport for London to engage them in ongoing discussion with pupils in relation to their behaviour and well-being on the buses. Senior leaders are continuing to negotiate alternative bus routes with Transport for London as another measure to keep pupils safe. The school is well informed about gang-related activities in the locality and neighbouring boroughs.

The Archdiocese, governors and local authority affirm the strong provision for pupils' moral and spiritual development. The school's ethos and relationships between girls support the Christian nature of the school, where leaders ensure that there is zero tolerance towards unacceptable behaviour. Discussions with pupils confirm that collectively they have a clear moral sense of right and wrong. In this, they are very much aware of the impact of their behaviour and attitudes on others and on the school's reputation.

Staff know the pupils very well and the issues that affect their lives. Senior leaders, including the governing body, have used their knowledge about the communities to create an environment in which girls can be 'empowered to become women of the future'. This nurturing environment has been possible because the quality of care, support and help provided for pupils is strong, and begins before pupils start at the school. Very good attention is paid to working with primary schools during the transfer into the school. Staff are well briefed about prospective pupils who are vulnerable or with behavioural problems, and potentially at risk of exclusion. This enables staff with responsibilities for pupils' care and guidance to gather and use information on pupils' behaviour to begin identifying appropriate support for them. The school reports that early preventative actions smooth the transition process. This contributes to pupils demonstrating good self-control, in keeping with the school's code of conduct.

Pupils value the support of the chaplain and counsellors, and know that help is always available. Senior and middle leaders with responsibilities for pupils' personal care and development use well-established systems for monitoring behaviour, making referrals and rewarding pupils. Help and support are timely and records of actions and outcomes are detailed.

A new initiative to improve behaviour, the community card, was introduced at the start of the current term. The list of behaviours expected of pupils as they move around the school is contributing to them taking more responsibility for controlling their attitudes and behaviour. It is too early to assess the full impact of this new initiative.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that pupils are listened to and their views are taken into consideration when making changes and developing policies.
- Ensure staff apply all policies relating to behaviour consistently and that school leaders do more to address the disproportionate exclusions for some groups of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bexley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney  
Her Majesty's Inspector