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Ms Keran Reilly
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Dear Ms Reilly

Short inspection of The Ursuline Academy Ilford

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 2016 with Nardeep Sharma, 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 March 2012.

The school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school. Since the last inspection, you and your leadership team have worked effectively to develop further the standard of education provided by the school.

The inclusion of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is central to the work you do. Pupils overall make good progress by the end of key stage 4 regardless of their starting points. Your evaluation of the school's current performance is accurate in identifying strengths as well as areas which require further work in order to achieve the higher standards for which you aim.

With the support of governors, you have maintained pupils' good outcomes at key stage 4 and improved progress effectively on 16 to 19 study programmes, as the 2016 outcomes demonstrate. High expectations led the school's thorough development planning, starting with improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Effective assessment and monitoring systems are in place at key stage 4 to support pupils' good progress, including the most able and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is leading to good outcomes in the vast majority of subjects at GCSE.

Leaders have taken action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all groups of pupils make good or better progress. Leaders' high

expectations remain ambitious to secure the best possible outcomes for all pupils. Your evaluation of the school's performance and areas for further work echo the key lines of enquiry of the inspection. For instance, you have focused on ensuring that progress for all learners following 16 to 19 study programmes is good, building on the gains made at GCSE. You have planned actions to continue to develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that the most able learners make rapid progress from their starting points, reflecting that made by other students.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and conduct during unstructured times are a strength of the school. The Catholic ethos of the school is clearly evident and the overall approach is highly inclusive. As a Year 13 learner reflected, 'The key values are ones shared across all religions'. The culture of the school is one which wants to care for the 'whole child' and parents and pupils alike recognise and value this approach highly. The strong relationships in the school underpin the positive attitudes to learning evident in the lessons we visited.

The curriculum is broad, with a good range of academic subjects on offer at GCSE and A level which meet the pupils' needs and aspirations well. The school's enrichment programme is wide-ranging and appreciated by the pupils. They spoke highly of opportunities and visits out of school, for example to the Houses of Parliament, and of the staff commitment to 'go the extra mile' to support their interests. The pupils enjoy being in school as evidenced, for example, by their very good attendance and good outcomes at the end of key stage 4. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively and the pastoral care for them is good. Their attendance matches that of their peers and their progress is above the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors ensure that the safety and well-being of the pupils is a priority, and place the development of 'the whole child' at the centre of the school's mission. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust and fit for purpose. Systems and processes for supporting pupils' welfare are applied consistently, including pre-employment checks made on staff. Policies are up to date and a review of your website is underway to ensure that the latest versions are easily available.

Staff and governors are clear about their roles and work effectively with external agencies when required. Staff have received appropriate information and training about a range of key issues, including female genital mutilation and the duty to keep pupils safe from harmful external influences. Pupils report that they are kept well informed of such issues through assemblies, personal, social and healthcare education (PSHE) sessions and visits from external organisations such as theatre in education groups. As a result, pupils are clear about how to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- You are rightly proud of the progress made by pupils at the end of key stage 4. The focus on supporting pupils to prepare for the demands of life beyond school

is evident in the good or better progress for pupils, particularly in English and mathematics.

- Governors provide effective support and challenge for school leaders. They are ambitious for the school's ongoing development, and the self-commissioned review of governance illustrates this ambition.
- Very positive responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff, pupils and parents underline the support for the school and its mission in the community.
- The adoption of new practice in teaching, learning and assessment has supported pupils in making good progress by the end of key stage 4. For example, inspectors observed pupils making the most of assessment routines in a Year 8 French lesson and a Year 11 religious studies lesson. However, at times, teachers do not use their knowledge of the most able pupils' prior performance in order to provide extension activities that challenge those pupils fully.
- The most able pupils take the opportunities that are given to develop their studies and appreciate tasks which both extend and deepen their understanding. The school plans to further develop the challenge which these pupils experience in lessons.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is evaluated by the school as good and evidence of this is clear in their good progress. Pupils who need support to improve their literacy skills make rapid progress as a result of a range of strategies. This includes matching younger pupils with more senior students as part of a 'Big Sister' scheme, enjoyed by Year 7 and their Year 13 'reading buddies' alike.
- Key stage 3 practice is beginning to develop pupils' ability to manage the demands of independent study required by the new assessment arrangements at key stages 4 and 5.
- The school's pastoral work is a strength and pupils spoke highly of the care demonstrated by staff. They feel that if they have a problem they can 'speak to anyone and they'll try to help'.
- Work has been carried out to strengthen the quality of middle leadership, something raised in the previous inspection report. The good outcomes in a wide range of subjects at key stage 4, along with evident developments in progress at key stage 5, show that this has been successful.
- The introduction of more rigorous tracking procedures in key stage 5 has helped quicken the pace of improvement, particularly in challenging the most able students.
- Leaders understand that a better balance between their strategic and operational roles is necessary to support longer-term development of their

specific areas of responsibility.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers challenge the most able consistently to make rapid progress
- 16 to 19 study programmes enable students to make consistently rapid progress to build on the good outcomes at key stage 4.

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

Yours sincerely

David Boyle
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to look at the following areas following discussion with you and your team:

- the extent to which teaching, learning and assessment supports good progress from pupils' starting points, particularly the most able
- the impact of 16 to 19 study programmes on helping students to excel
- the impact of pupil premium funding upon sustaining and improving disadvantaged pupils outcomes
- how the school supports pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspectors met with you and senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding. They also met with governors and held formal and informal conversations with pupils.

Inspectors visited 15 lessons along with members of your senior leadership team, mainly in key stages 4 and 5. Inspectors analysed a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, minutes of governing body meetings, school policies and procedures. They examined the school's self-evaluation of its own performance and the development plan. They reviewed records about keeping pupils safe and the register of pre-recruitment checks made on staff.