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Justine McDonald  
Headteacher  
Our Lady's Convent Roman Catholic High School  
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Dear Ms McDonald

### **Short inspection of Our Lady's Convent Roman Catholic High School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 2016 with Sunday Ellis, 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 January 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in January 2016, you have undertaken a comprehensive review of the school's work. Your experience as deputy headteacher of the school allowed you to focus quickly on improving standards. For example, you have addressed potential barriers to pupils' progress with precision, so that they now achieve their lofty ambitions more consistently. You and your leadership team have worked well to sustain pupils' excellent progress at GCSE while addressing areas of the school's work that you rightly identify need additional improvement. You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning continues to be good and is improving. Teachers receive more bespoke training to support their professional development which has secured the good progress pupils make in most subjects. For example, progress in mathematics is now much improved for all groups of pupils.

New appointments, including to the senior leadership team, have increased leaders' capacity to develop strategies that sustain and improve pupils' outcomes. More recent changes, for example in the role of the special educational needs coordinator, are yet to embed fully so it is too early to see the impact. Your new assessment system allows leaders and governors to more accurately monitor pupils' progress. However, teachers and middle leaders are yet to use this wealth of new information effectively enough in their planning. Governors hold leaders to account with rigour, asking pertinent questions and regularly visiting the school to learn

about how new strategies are working.

Your ethos of school improvement is rooted in the school's Catholic Servite values. They underpin the moral imperative that sits at the heart of all work in the school. Those values provide the foundation for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and firm appreciation of British values. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their strong attendance overall. However, some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have struggled to maintain consistently good attendance, despite the work of the school's inclusion and attendance teams.

Leaders recognise that further work is needed to get performance in the sixth form up to the standard seen at key stages 3 and 4. In 2015, pupils studying A levels made average progress by the end of their study programmes, slower than the few students studying work-related courses. Last year students made better progress but some variations between subjects remain. Despite pupils making strong progress at GCSE, leaders have identified gaps in the development of some skills that are required to be highly successful at A level. Strategies are now in place to support pupils' skills development in key stages 3 and 4 so that the effective support, advice and guidance pupils receive is matched by their ability to succeed in their study programmes.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective through regular checks on the school's procedures and practice. The school works closely with the local authority and other appropriate external agencies to ensure that correct procedures are followed should concerns arise. Staff, parents and pupils agree that this is a safe learning environment where opportunities to learn about national and local issues enhance the community's ability to prevent and respond to risk. Recent training regarding female genital mutilation and the 'Prevent' duty have been effective in raising awareness of specific issues that may particularly impact the local community. Bullying is very rare at this school and dealt with effectively if it happens. Pupils feel happy and confident to talk to any member of staff and their friends if they have any concerns.

### **Inspection findings**

- Since the last inspection outcomes at GCSE have improved. Many more pupils are gaining good GCSEs across a range of subjects and pupils' progress overall provisionally places the school in the top 10% in the country. Disadvantaged pupils' progress exceeded that of their peers nationally, continuing the trend from 2015.
- Strong progress is underpinned by effective teaching across the curriculum. Teachers' secure subject knowledge supports their use of effective resources and appropriate activities that build upon pupils' prior learning well. At its best, questioning is used skilfully to probe pupils' perceptions and tease out the reasoning behind pupils' assertions.

- Teachers do not plan to meet some pupils' needs precisely enough because the information is not yet readily available to help them do this. For example, leaders appropriately target additional support at the most able and disadvantaged pupils and this deepens their learning most of the time. However, the most able disadvantaged pupils are not identified as a group in teachers' planning, and middle leaders' analysis of pupils' performance is not yet precise enough.
- In science and mathematics, the most able disadvantaged pupils performed less well than their peers last year. This bucked a trend where previously this small cohort of pupils have done far better than their peers nationally.
- Attendance has historically been a particular strength of the school, reflecting pupils' desire to come to school and learn. This continues to be the case although the attendance of some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been harder to sustain at a good level. Leaders have recently reorganised the inclusion department, and refined the role of the special educational needs coordinator. This is beginning to further enhance the support those pupils receive and is slowly improving their attendance.
- Pupils are provided with helpful and appropriate advice and guidance when making their decisions about their future education, training and employment. Pupils move onto a wide range of destinations, most of which are academic and university based. Leaders are responding to students' broader range of demands by looking to introduce new work-related courses.
- Leaders have identified that despite pupils performing well at GCSE there has been a historical mismatch between the skills some pupils develop in their earlier schooling and those required to succeed at A level. Students' progress at A level has been slower than it should have been, particularly in English. Leaders have now introduced new strategies, including via teachers' professional development, to focus more on developing skills early so that pupils proceed onto the courses they aspire to and can achieve highly on.
- At all levels, school leaders are held to account effectively for their work. Leaders have reviewed the way departments work with one another, improving their effectiveness at supporting pupils' progress. Staff are more able to successfully coordinate efforts to support pupils at risk of underperforming.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for their pupils and have sought to further improve behaviour to support better progress in lessons. The newly introduced behaviour policy this year has already markedly reduced instances of low-level disruption to learning.
- The school is well-supported by the local authority's school improvement adviser. The headteacher takes every opportunity to collaborate informally with other local schools in the borough in order to learn from their work. This is particularly effective in helping middle leaders to manage national changes to curriculum specifications.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new assessment system quickly becomes consistently well used by middle leaders and teachers to refine their planning in order to more precisely meet pupils' needs
- strategies to develop the skills that pupils require at A level are quickly embedded so that outcomes improve consistently across A-level subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

The inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- How disadvantaged pupils are supported in science and mathematics, particularly the most able disadvantaged
- How leaders are working to improve the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- The way leaders and governors evaluate the school's work in order to drive further developments
- How students are now performing on A-level study programmes
- Whether the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare are effective.

The inspectors carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection:

- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, governors, the local authority's school improvement partner, and pupils.
- Inspectors visited 18 lessons with senior leaders and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors considered the few responses to Ofsted's parent and pupil surveys and 34 responses from staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including: assessment and behaviour information; leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for development; the single central record of pre-employment checks; policies and procedures; minutes of governors' meetings.