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7 February 2017

Mr Dean Juric  
Headteacher  
St Robert of Newminster Roman Catholic School  
Biddick Lane  
Washington  
Tyne and Wear  
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Dear Mr Juric

### **Short inspection of St Robert of Newminster Roman Catholic School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2017 with Gordon Watts, 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.

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

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have implemented procedures to evaluate the quality of education provided and these have led to an accurate and comprehensive self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Leaders are working hard to implement plans and are improving the school's effectiveness. Leaders are knowledgeable, thorough and committed to the pupils in your school.

Since your appointment in September 2015, you have worked with your senior leaders, middle leaders and school staff to ensure high levels of accountability throughout the school. Middle leaders' skills in evaluating how well pupils are doing are improving all of the time. Through calendared monitoring activities and actions taken from findings, middle leaders strive for the highest standards in their departments. There is an open culture where everyone works together to improve progress for all pupils.

Pupils enjoy learning and being at your school. They are well cared for by your staff. Your curriculum is planned to maximise opportunities for pupils and is broad and balanced. Extra-curricular opportunities are plentiful and help to support pupils to develop wider personal and social skills.

The previous inspection highlighted the need to improve the quality of teaching and to ensure that literacy skills are supported across the curriculum. It is clear from the evidence gathered during this inspection that teaching and literacy skills have

improved. You effectively spend catch-up funding to ensure that pupils who are behind their peers in literacy and numeracy catch up, and continue to make good progress. Through your strong procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching, teachers have access to a wide range of professional development opportunities and they actively share good practice, which is improving the quality of teaching overall.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are robust, well documented and of a high quality.

The open culture you have created in your school means that pupils are safe, they know how to stay safe and they know who to turn to if there are any issues. If safeguarding concerns arise, your staff deal with them well and follow them through to ensure positive outcomes for your pupils. Yours is a caring and supportive school and this helps your vulnerable pupils to feel safe. You have ensured that your personal, social, health and economic education programme educates pupils about risk.

### **Inspection findings**

- Attendance for key groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is below that of other pupils. An overhaul of the way leaders follow up absence is resulting in a more stringent approach and an improving emphasis on attendance at all levels including for these key groups, which is leading to improvements.
- Some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Where pupils are not making as much progress as their peers from similar starting points, leaders have responded to this by implementing a number of strategies to support them. Evidence of the impact of these strategies is starting to be seen in pupils' work and in individual education plans, which have clear and measurable targets and are improving progress for these pupils. It is too soon, however, to see the full impact of all of the strategies.
- Leaders have embedded a rigorous approach to the monitoring, evaluation and improving of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Through this approach, professional development opportunities are well matched to teachers' needs and the impact of training is seen in lessons, in books and in the strong progress that pupils make.
- Teachers know pupils well. Through the effective use of pupil information, teachers plan lessons to meet the needs of individual learners. This means that teachers challenge pupils of all abilities to work hard and make good progress.
- Teachers and pupils have excellent relationships in all year groups. Through this, behaviour is excellent and pupils want to learn. Pupils take pride in their work, are self-assured and confident in their abilities and so make good progress.
- The programme of study for post-16 education is compliant with government

requirements. Students have access to a wide range of activities, including work experience to prepare them for the world of work. Students take opportunities to take part in diocesan events, community events and voluntary work.

- Teachers challenge students in the sixth form to think hard and deepen their understanding. Files and exam preparation materials are well organised and students make strong progress.
- Sixth form leaders have strengthened the procedures for entry to the sixth form and retention rates are improving because students are now following the most appropriate courses, given their aspirations. Students receive careers advice and guidance but say that although preparation for university progression is effective, preparation for other employment routes is not as strong.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies for improvement, including those relating to attendance and the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are evaluated for their impact
- the quality of careers advice and guidance in the sixth form is improved, so that students have a clear understanding of all options, including employment, available to them.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, governors, your school improvement partner and your pupils. We gathered a range of evidence from conducting learning walks and a work scrutiny jointly with your senior leaders. The inspection team scrutinised and evaluated documents including your child protection policy, safeguarding records, school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, minutes from governors' meetings, evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning, performance management information and attendance information. Account was taken of 158 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 226 responses to pupil questionnaires and 20 responses to staff questionnaires.

**The key lines of enquiry for this inspection were as follows:**

- Have leaders and managers taken action to improve attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities? What has been the impact of their actions?
- Is the quality of teaching and learning improving at the school and ensuring that all groups of pupils are making good progress?
- Is the sixth form still good? Is it compliant with the government requirements for the post-16 programme of study? Are retention rates improving and are students receiving appropriate careers advice and guidance?
- Is safeguarding effective?