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Mr Matthew Quinn
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Dear Mr Quinn

Short inspection of Oaklands Catholic School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2017 with Mary Hoather, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are determined and focused on raising standards, keeping a close eye on pupils' learning in lessons and insisting on respectful behaviour. You have skilfully managed the changes within your senior leadership team, as well as the challenges of recruiting high quality staff, particularly in science and mathematics. Pupils know that you provide them with experiences to enable them to flourish. Parents describe the school as 'an exceptional school' and say that you are a 'dedicated headteacher, who strives to make the school the best it can be'.

You and your leaders model the school's ethos, 'no one gets left behind', very well. You have focused rightly on the progress of individual pupils and specific groups as your main priority. You have developed your leadership team by replacing staff that have left and have put in place a range of strategies to monitor progress more sharply. Staff clearly appreciate how you create frequent opportunities to improve professional practice. As a result, teaching has improved so that all pupils are challenged and supported to do their best.

You continue to ensure that the ethos of the school engenders pride in staff and pupils. Consequently, staff go 'above and beyond' to support the pupils academically and socially. Staff value the systems you have put in place to record and reward performance. Further training meets their individual needs well. Informal support within school is provided, including peer-to-peer coaching that teachers initiate

themselves. This extends their confidence in using strategies to challenge higher-ability pupils. Teachers feel able to try out varied approaches to learning that are much appreciated by the pupils. Pupils recognise that teachers use their skills to make lessons 'interesting and fun'. Members of the school community praise the open and frequent communication between leaders, other staff, pupils and parents.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection effectively. You have brought about improvements in teaching so that lessons are planned thoughtfully to match the needs of the different abilities of pupils in the class. Pupils are making better progress because lessons have a clear structure and the work is pitched at a higher level. Subject leaders know the strengths of the staff because they make suitable checks on teachers in their teams. Leaders share exciting resources and effective strategies regularly, which help staff to improve their practice. Leaders need to take further action to strengthen their support for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4 to enable them to do as well as their peers. Leaders in the sixth form need to monitor the achievements of all students, not only those who are falling behind.

Safeguarding is effective.

- There are secure systems in place to safely recruit and check on the suitability of staff. Staff with additional responsibility are well trained and share the most up-to-date information regularly and frequently. As a result, staff know how to keep pupils safe. Members of the governing body take their responsibility seriously to check that the school has appropriate systems in place to support vulnerable pupils. These pupils are doing increasingly well, with an extensive range of additional services to support them.
- Leaders also work in close partnerships with other agencies and strive relentlessly for the best outcomes for pupils. As a result, parents speak highly about the care and support available to pupils, especially those who need additional help. Sixth form students and the pupils in the school are taught well to keep themselves safe. The personal development and citizenship curriculum forms a firm foundation for pupils' secure knowledge of risks. Pupils do not only feel safe while at school but comment that they feel 'safe for life'.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we focused on: the quality of safeguarding; actions taken since the previous inspection; the attendance and progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; the progress of sixth form students; the impact of leadership in the school.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Their comprehensive plan for improvement accurately identifies the areas of priority to work on. You have revised the senior leadership team's responsibilities so that leaders are more effective at improving the quality of teaching, learning and

assessment and increasing the progress that disadvantaged pupils make.

- Governors support and challenge leaders judiciously in committee meetings and through their links with departments across the school. Governors are able to carry out their statutory duties effectively because of the open relationship they have with you and the high standard of information and evidence that you provide.
- You have created a culture in which pupils expect to do well. In 2016, a higher than average proportion of Year 11 pupils gained good GCSE grades. Almost twice the national average obtained a grade C or better in English, mathematics, science, humanities and languages. Leaders and managers have responded to the information that some pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, did not make as much progress in their learning as you expected.
- Senior leaders have introduced a new system for assessing pupils' progress that provides a very clear picture of how each individual pupil is doing. Teachers are using information for day-to-day planning effectively, to meet the needs of pupils and students. Typically, in English lessons, teachers use their knowledge of recent assessments to provide suitable tasks for those who are close to achieving a higher grade, while helping students who have not achieved as well as expected.
- Leaders, teachers and support staff know the pupils very well. Consequently, they are adept at finding ways to motivate and support them to learn. Pupils feel challenged but not overwhelmed by their teachers' expectations of them and make good use of opportunities to extend their learning further or access help. For example, pupils take advantage of 'additional learning opportunities' that are offered outside of lessons, attending if they want extra help to understand a topic, or to seek extension work to help deepen their learning.
- Teachers take effective action to support pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils now make progress that is in line with other pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with special resources and equipment where necessary. They are encouraged and helped to complete work to a good standard. Pupils who are disadvantaged are placed carefully within the classrooms, sometimes sitting in small groups or next to known individuals who support them well.
- Leaders work with staff recently identified as departmental 'pupil premium champions' to spend the pupil premium funding on a range of interventions and additional activities. Leaders review strategies stringently to ensure that they benefit the pupils and, where poor value for money is identified, the intervention is replaced with an alternative that has worked better with other pupils. The group of pupil premium champions meets regularly to share successful strategies and support disadvantaged pupils make better progress. As a result, the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils in key stage 3 is used effectively.
- Leaders have not applied rigour to rapidly accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4. Pupils need to improve quickly to achieve as

well as others.

- You recognised that, in 2016, Year 13 students did not all make progress that was in line with expectations. Leadership of the sixth form has since been strengthened by the appointment of two additional staff who are responsible for monitoring the attendance and academic achievement of students. Students feel that these changes have had a strong influence on keeping them on track to meet expected AS and A level grades. Students recognise the increased level of challenge in lessons. They respond to it well, keen to meet their teachers' high expectations. However, leaders in the sixth form are not checking systematically that all groups of students are on track to achieve their targets. This is because leaders have focused most stringently on individuals who fall behind.
- You have taken successful steps to further improve pupils' attendance. In 2016, attendance of all pupils was above the national average overall. However, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, did not attend as regularly as others. Your appointment of staff to solely focus on attendance, their work with families and effective interventions have reduced the challenge of getting pupils into lessons more frequently. Persistent absence has not reduced at the same rate as attendance has improved. Several pupils who miss long periods of school have diagnosed medical conditions.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies are developed to further accelerate the rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4, especially in science and mathematics
- information on sixth form progress is analysed more thoroughly to ensure that all students achieve their full potential.

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

Yours sincerely

Karen Roche
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your leaders, staff and governors. Policies around safeguarding, your self-evaluation, your school development plan and other documents were scrutinised. We also observed learning, alongside leaders, in all year groups across

a range of subjects. There were informal and formal meetings with pupils and discussions with pupils in the canteen at breaktime and around the school. We also looked at pupils' work in lessons with leaders, in particular science and mathematics books, especially those of the disadvantaged pupils. The 145 parent responses to Parent View and their comments were also analysed.