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Mr Stephen Gabriel  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Gabriel

### **Short inspection of St Peter's RC High School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2017 with Debra Wood, 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 June 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up your post as headteacher in September 2016, following the retirement of the long-serving previous headteacher. You have wisely retained the services of a former deputy headteacher to advise and support you during this transition period. There have been a number of staffing changes, including at senior leadership level, since the last inspection. You have begun to rationalise the roles and responsibilities of your senior colleagues so that these meet the needs of the school more closely. These changes have ensured that leaders have the capacity to maintain the school's focus on providing a good quality of education for its pupils. You have a committed, enthusiastic and talented team in place to continue to take the school forward.

You, your leadership team and the governors have worked hard to create a school where pupils achieve as best they can and leave the school with strong outcomes, regardless of their ability or their background. Pupils appreciate the culture of high aspiration that pervades the school and thrive in the orderly and purposeful learning environment.

You provide strong and effective leadership. Staff are overwhelmingly positive in support of the school and your leadership. Leaders at all levels follow your example and set challenging targets for staff and pupils. Pupils told me that staff often 'go the extra mile' to help them and they are really appreciative of the support they

receive from leaders and teachers. Staff quickly identify where pupils are underachieving and take concerted action to address this, for example through the use of the 'study rooms' in key stages 3 and 4 where pupils receive additional, personalised support from teachers and English and mathematics graduates.

Pupils generally leave St Peter's well prepared for employment, education or training. Large numbers of pupils progress to the local Catholic sixth-form colleges. Pupils receive good careers advice and guidance from the school's own dedicated careers adviser. Coinciding with the inspection, all Year 10 pupils were interviewed by adults from various employment sectors; this initiative was well received by pupils, who approached it responsibly and maturely, and by the adult workers themselves.

You have worked with pupils on establishing and embedding the school's core values of achievement, responsibility, love and diversity. You and other leaders have established an ethos in which every pupil is valued and respected. The school is a harmonious community where pupils from many widely differing backgrounds get on well together.

Your pupils are well mannered and the great majority are well behaved. They wear their uniform smartly and take pride in their work. Pupils' behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school, and their attitudes to learning are generally very positive. Pupils told inspectors that there is occasionally a little low-level disruption. Inspectors observed a little off-task behaviour from a small number of pupils when teaching failed to keep their attention. The school has more to do to reduce the numbers of fixed-term exclusions given to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff feel that you have already made improvements in the way that behaviour is managed. One member of staff commented, 'Simple, consistent policies have resulted in our pupils showing a better attitude to learning and improved outcomes in the classroom.'

You and other senior leaders are keenly aware of the school's strengths and the areas which need to be developed further. You correctly identified that humanities and modern foreign languages were subjects which did not perform well enough in 2016. You have taken action to support and challenge these two departments, including through the use of the performance management system and through changes to leadership. As a result, teaching is improving in these two areas and pupils' achievement is rising. You recognise, however, that there is still work to do to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should, especially in history.

Pupils' attendance overall is above national averages. This reflects how well the school cares for its pupils and how much they value what it does for them. However, you recognise that the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities needed to improve and systems are now in place to address this.

Governors, senior leaders and staff have taken action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. In 2013, inspectors identified the

need to ensure that teachers use information about what pupils already know and understand to set tasks for them that are neither too easy nor too hard. During this inspection, teachers in most lessons observed were challenging pupils appropriately, often by setting tasks at different levels, though this was not entirely consistent across subjects. Pupils told inspectors that levels of challenge are high in most of their lessons and that this helps them to make progress.

The previous inspection also identified the need for leaders to enhance the rigour with which leaders check the quality of teaching. You and the governors hold your middle leaders firmly to account for the quality of teaching in their departments. Leaders now have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. During this inspection, leaders joined inspectors in observing lessons and were accurate in their assessments of progress made by pupils.

You have made improving teaching a key priority. You and the governors have invested time and resources in a programme designed to improve teaching across the curriculum. You and your middle leaders acknowledge that this is still in its early days and that the good practice developing needs to be sustained and embedded. However, several staff told inspectors that they welcome the programme, that it is improving their practice and that greater consistency in the way teachers structure lessons has already resulted. You and other leaders expect high standards of teachers and you use appraisal effectively to improve performance. Where expected standards are not met, you take firm action to address this.

You have accurately identified the next steps for the school to improve further. We agreed that further work is needed to embed and sustain improvements in humanities and modern foreign languages and that more work is needed to bring the quality of teaching of a minority of teachers closer to the high standards of the best. We also agreed that the school will need to maintain its efforts to reduce the persistent absence of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Your governors know the school and its strengths and weaknesses well. They hold leaders rigorously to account and ask challenging questions to assess the quality of provision. They manage finance effectively, including the pupil premium and the school's use of its funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors are experienced and committed and bring a wide range of skills to the governing body.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that the school has a strong culture of safeguarding and vigilance. Safeguarding procedures are thorough, robust and understood by all staff and governors. Your recruitment checks are sound and all safeguarding policies meet the statutory requirements. All staff receive up-to-date training and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. External agencies are used appropriately to support pupils and their families. Governors, too, have been trained in safeguarding matters and they take their responsibilities very seriously.

Pupils report that bullying rarely occurs, but if it does, it is dealt with swiftly and

effectively by staff. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the internet and when using social media. The school has strong internet filtering procedures in place. They are also taught how to stay safe in the community beyond the school's gates.

The school works hard at involving the pupils themselves in addressing safeguarding issues. The pupils' 'I Matter' team discusses safeguarding and safety issues. They plan assemblies and other sessions for their peers.

## **Inspection findings**

- Pupils make good progress overall. In 2016, the school's Progress 8 score, the new government measure by which secondary school achievement is judged, was significantly above national averages, even though these pupils had arrived at St Peter's from their primary schools with starting points lower than average. Progress was also well above average in English and above average in science and in English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. Progress in mathematics was broadly in line with national averages.
- Low-ability pupils and most disadvantaged pupils made very good progress overall and in a number of key subject areas in 2016. In English and in the EBacc, the progress made by these groups of pupils was in the top 10% nationally, and it was also significantly higher than national averages in mathematics.
- The most able pupils made strong progress in English and science in 2016, but they made less progress than nationally in the EBacc, humanities and modern foreign languages. The overall progress made by most-able disadvantaged pupils was broadly in line with national averages.
- The school's internal assessment information indicates that overall good progress made in 2016 is likely to be sustained in 2017. Leaders have identified where there is potential underachievement and have put in place suitable interventions to tackle this. Overall progress in Years 7 to 10 is strong currently.
- English is a strength of the school. Teaching in English is generally very strong and staff have very high expectations of their pupils. As a result, pupils' progress in English is outstanding. Boys made very strong progress in English in 2016, which went against the national trend.
- Teaching is good overall and promotes pupils' good progress. Most teaching challenges pupils because teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. Pupils respond well to this challenge, often showing high-level thinking themselves. Occasionally, and where the level of challenge is not high enough for the most able, teachers miss the opportunity to extend pupils' thinking with good questioning. Teaching is improving in humanities and modern foreign languages.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It offers pupils a range of appropriate, challenging courses, including some vocational options, and the school is increasing the percentage of pupils entering the EBacc.
- Attendance is above average, including for disadvantaged pupils. The rate of

persistent absence is lower than national averages. The persistent absence of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was high in 2016, but it is showing an improving trend.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they take further action to improve teaching so that more of it matches the best
- they continue to support and challenge leaders and teachers in humanities and modern foreign languages, so that pupils make the progress in these subjects that is expected of them.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Hurren  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we held discussions with you and your senior colleagues, a group of subject leaders and, separately, a group of teachers. I met with members of the governing body. We met formally with groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4 and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You and your senior colleagues accompanied us on visits to lessons, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some books. We examined a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, attendance information, a range of policies and the school's curriculum and assessment information. I scrutinised your self-evaluation and your school improvement plan.

I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered six free-text responses from parents, 73 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 13 pupil responses.