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Sister Bernadette
Headteacher
Virgo Fidelis Convent Senior School
147 Central Hill
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Dear Sister Bernadette

Short inspection of Virgo Fidelis Convent Senior School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017 with Gerard Strong, 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. All staff share your determination to improve the quality of education for the pupils. The recent appointments you have made to your senior leadership team have made a difference to the pace at which improvements are being made. The impact of these changes is already evident as current performance information shows that outcomes for all pupils are improving.

You are determined to ensure that your pupils become 'well-rounded human beings'. You provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills both in and outside of the classroom. Pupils appreciate events like science week and the opportunity to address the mayor in a public speaking competition. They said that these activities help to develop their confidence as well as their passion for subjects.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all teaching is consistently good. You have invested a great deal of resources in developing teaching. Leaders and teachers value your partnership with the Catholic Teaching School Alliance, and it has had an impact on the quality of teaching. Your performance management of teachers is rigorous, and teachers value the support and encouragement they are given to improve their practice. Your own records indicate that teaching is more effective since the previous inspection. The improving outcomes for pupils support this.

Your head of sixth form has addressed the second area that you were asked to improve after the previous inspection. Rigorous tracking systems have been introduced to ensure the identification of pupils who are underachieving. These pupils are then supported with a range of interventions to improve the progress they make. Current performance information indicates that this is having an impact on the attainment of pupils in the sixth form.

Your leadership team has a very thorough understanding of what the school does well and areas that need improving. You have detailed plans, which focus on the improvements you need to make to ensure that the school becomes outstanding. Senior leaders have worked hard with middle leaders to ensure that they are clear about the schools' priorities, which they use to inform their plans. Although school planning is informed by thorough analysis, sometimes it is unclear what specific actions are to take place and what the impact will be.

Governors understand the important role they play in improving the school. They recently took the decision to change their constitution and, as a result, the membership of the governing body has significantly changed. It is now a smaller group with a broad range of knowledge and skills. Governors understand the need to focus on education outcomes for pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. They take their own professional development seriously and recognise that further training will be required during the next academic year if they are to continue to hold senior leaders to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are relentless in the actions that they take to ensure that pupils are safe and cared for. Your safeguarding procedures are rigorous, and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff and governors receive regular training and are reminded constantly about their duties to safeguard pupils. They understand the importance of reporting any concerns quickly.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in the school. They feel that the changes made by your new deputy headteacher have helped to make the school much calmer. They appreciate the work that staff do to keep them safe. You have created a culture in which adults and pupils know the importance of being safe and keeping each other safe.

Inspection findings

- Pupils make similar or better progress than their peers nationally across a range of subjects. The achievement in science and languages is particularly impressive. The progress made by the most-able disadvantaged pupils and the low attainers in their reading is improving. The progress information that you have for your current pupils indicates that outcomes for all year groups is good.
- Historically, the progress made by the less-able disadvantaged pupils in mathematics has been significantly lower than their peers nationally. You have taken swift action to address this. These pupils now receive a range of

interventions, including additional lessons. Your current assessment information shows that these pupils now make similar progress to their peers.

- Inclusion is very important to you and, as a result, you have rightly focused on the low attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your leaders will not leave a stone unturned when tackling poor attendance and this is really bearing fruit. In particular, you have seen dramatic improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The strategies employed by leaders are comprehensive and highly effective. The use of rewards and the calm environment that you have created have certainly had an impact on pupils' attendance. However, you have recognised that the current attendance of Black Caribbean pupils needs to improve.
- Your own records indicate that teaching is consistently good. The outcomes of pupils support this evaluation. The work that we saw in pupils' books and the information that you made available to us support your evaluation that teaching across subjects and year groups is good. Your teachers have strong subject knowledge. This was seen in the geography department, where teachers and pupils were engaged in high-level discussions about coastal erosion. However, you have identified that developing more outstanding teaching continues to be a priority for the school.
- Pupils' progress is now being reviewed more effectively in the sixth form and across the whole school. Senior and middle leaders use this information to provide the support that pupils need to make better progress. Pupils who do not make the progress that you expect are now mentored and receive additional guidance from their teachers and senior leaders. As a result, performance information for the sixth form indicates an improvement in all subjects.
- Leadership has been strengthened in the school. The new deputy headteacher has taken swift action to improve the curriculum, attendance and punctuality. There are now different pathways at key stage four, so pupils can choose a curriculum that meets their needs and interests. Pupils are now aware that attendance is important and feel that they are given helpful guidance about careers they may follow. As a result, they are prepared better for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders' tracking and analysis of pupils' progress across the whole school is now more rigorous. Once a half term, your senior team drills deeply into the data that they collect about pupils so that they can put in place interventions that are making a difference to pupils' achievement. This is reflected in the current progress of pupils, which is improving in most subjects. You have correctly identified subjects in which pupils' progress is weaker and have taken action to address this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- newly appointed governors continue to develop the skills they have, which enable

them to hold senior leaders to account

- the development plans that leaders produce have specific actions, which can be monitored more easily.

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

Yours sincerely

Helena Mills
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, we met with you, senior leaders, middle leaders, one newly qualified teacher and two members of the governing body. We spoke to a representative from the archdiocese and a representative from the local authority. With members of your leadership team, we conducted two learning walks, visited a range of lessons and had the opportunity to speak to pupils and to see their work. We met with a group of pupils during the day. There were seven responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents. We scrutinised a range of documentation, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.