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12 March 2018

Mr Peter Sweeney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sweeney

Short inspection of Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2018 with Brenda Watson and Paul O'Shea, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your clear vision, commitment, uncompromising drive and determination has enabled you to maintain and improve the good-quality provision. You have the trust and respect of your colleagues. You have recently reorganised the senior leadership team to enable the school to be in closer reach of its ambition of becoming outstanding. This refusal to accept anything but the very best is further testimony to your strong leadership and that of other senior leaders.

Since the last inspection, you have been appointed as a national leader of education, supporting effective improvement in both the primary and secondary sectors. The school has also become a national support school.

The school's atmosphere is calm and peaceful. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. You have created an environment that is well-organised and productive to learning. As a result, pupils enjoy school, are keen to learn and make good progress in their learning.

Pupils are very proud of their school and wear their uniforms with pride. They are articulate, kind, respectful young people. They talked to inspectors about its friendliness and how each person is valued as a unique individual. Pupils expressed high approval about the help and guidance they are given. Music and off-site visits

and trips are particularly popular with pupils. Pupils are highly motivated and are keen to attend the many extra-curricular opportunities available. One pupil who expressed the views of many, commented, 'Even though I will leave St Joan of Arc, St Joan of Arc won't leave me.'

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire were extremely positive about the school. Those we spoke to reported that they feel happy with their children's progress and would recommend the school.

The governing body is committed wholeheartedly to the school's work. Governors show the same determination as you do for each pupil to succeed. Members of the governing body are clear about their roles. They confidently challenge and hold leaders to account to bring about improvements. They know which groups of pupils do not make the same rapid progress as others in the school and are working collaboratively with you to address this.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and are of a high quality. The single central record is complete. Leaders have ensured that staff in all areas of the school are very clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. You have developed a culture where keeping children safe is at the forefront of the school's work. Bullying is extremely rare, but when relationships do stop working, staff intervene appropriately, and issues are dealt with swiftly. You are acutely aware of the most vulnerable groups and ensure that multidisciplinary meetings regarding the support provided for vulnerable pupils is formally recorded.

This is a caring school. Pupils and staff feel safe. Senior leaders and governors have reviewed the risk assessment for the school site, including how assistance can be sought if needed. The school building and the security systems help keep pupils secure. Senior leaders have also gathered information about the tuition provided to pupils by staff outside of school time to know the extent of this support.

Teachers help pupils to understand the risk of unsafe behaviour. Consequently, pupils are knowledgeable about e-safety. Pupils are able to communicate their understanding of safety confidently. For example, one pupil told an inspector that he was able to speak to them because they were wearing a school lanyard and were therefore safe. Pupils' conduct around the school also adds to the safe environment as their behaviour is exceptional and as one pupil commented, 'We take care of each other.'

Inspection findings

- Pupils' behaviour around the school continues to be exemplary. Pupils told inspectors that the procedures used by teachers for managing behaviour in lessons is rarely used, as very few pupils disrupt the learning of others. Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown by their regular attendance. Leaders have a

comprehensive system in place which enables them to act quickly when attendance is too low. Leaders fully analyse attendance and behaviour records. This ensures that trends and patterns are identified, and action taken when needed.

- We also looked at progress in 16 to 19 study programmes to see what leaders are doing to improve outcomes even further. This is because progress overall is in line with the national average but in terms of value added it remains below average for some subjects. Observations carried out jointly with leaders found students engrossed in their work but there is still some inconsistency in a few subjects in relation to challenge. Sixth-form leaders already recognise and acknowledge this and are addressing these shortcomings. Students benefit from a curriculum that is carefully matched to their individual needs and abilities. They receive early advice and clear guidance when making decisions about education, training or employment, which they value.
- My final focus was on the area for improvement identified in the previous inspection: raising the quality of teaching. Leaders now identify the best practice in teaching and share this with all staff through regular training. Teachers ensure that low and middle-ability pupils complete work that is carefully matched to their needs. The standard that disadvantaged pupils achieve is better than that seen for other pupils nationally and continues to improve for current pupils. However, the level of challenge for the most able pupils is not consistently as effective as it is for other groups. This is because teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils are capable of achieving is not always high enough to ensure they make rapid progress. You know that there is more to be done to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most able, make the same excellent progress as the middle ability pupils, and leaders have an effective plan to support this. You also acknowledge that teachers need to understand data better to ensure more challenge to pupils.
- Science deserves a particular mention in relation to the progress made by the department since the last inspection. A new leadership structure has had a positive impact in terms of accountability. In 2017, progress in science at GCSE was significantly above the national average. Inspectors observed that the majority of teaching is skilfully adapted according to the needs of an individual or group.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff are more sharply focused in the use of data, particularly around challenging specific groups, including the most able
- pupils, especially those of higher ability, make rapid progress

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Westminster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke to you, your senior leaders and the governors. We observed learning and teaching across the key stages. I scrutinised a range of documents, including your self-evaluation and school development plan. We had a meeting with three groups of pupils. We scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation and a sample of pupils' files. I analysed Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and the online staff and pupil questionnaires.