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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Ms Sue Smith
Headteacher
Saint Pius X Catholic High School A Specialist School in Humanities
Wath Wood Road
Wath-upon-Dearne
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S63 7PQ

Dear Ms Smith

Short inspection of Saint Pius X Catholic High School A Specialist School in Humanities

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2018 with Peter Cole, 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 September 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Your evaluation of the school is clear and you know the key areas that require further improvement. Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2016, you have worked to address the issues identified at the time of the previous inspection. For example, the school was asked to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported effectively. This has been addressed well. The school was also asked to ensure that all middle leaders were effective in improving teaching and learning. You have worked to improve the effectiveness of your current leadership team. However, further developing their knowledge of how well different groups of pupils are doing over time across the various year groups in school remains a priority for improvement.

Published data shows that, from their starting points, pupils' progress overall in the last two years has been no better than average. In Year 11 in 2017, pupils' rates of progress varied between subjects and for different groups of pupils. For example, in humanities pupils achieved well, while in others, including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, they did not. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils lagged some way behind that of other pupils

nationally.

You and your team are acutely aware of this and have been focused strongly on improving teaching and outcomes in the core subjects, especially for these specific pupil groups. You have taken firm action to boost pupils' achievement in mathematics. Improvements are reflected, for example, in the higher proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels in the Year 11 mathematics examinations in 2017. Your present focus on improving the achievement of the current Year 11 pupils is also paying off. These pupils are generally making better progress. However, in other year groups, pupils' current progress remains variable both between subjects and between different groups of pupils. You know that accelerating the progress of pupils in the core subjects, especially English and science, across all the year groups, and especially that of the most able and disadvantaged pupils, is an important next step for leaders to address. At present, leaders' and governors' evaluations place too little emphasis on rigorously checking how well different groups of pupils are doing in year groups other than Year 11.

Pupils enjoy school and are mainly positive about their experiences. Attendance is improving over time. Pupils speak highly of you and your staff. Scrutiny of pupils' books clearly demonstrates that they take pride in the work that they do. They respond well to any advice that is given. Relationships between staff and pupils are clearly supportive and engaging. Pupils' behaviour around school is good. The courtesy shown to my colleague and I demonstrates that pupils are confident and happy.

The local authority works in collaboration with the diocese to provide relevant challenge and development opportunities to your staff. This support has accelerated since you became headteacher, and improvements are being made. However, these improvements are in the early stages. Pupils' outcomes are not consistently good.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The leadership team maintains detailed and secure records of checks on staff and the behaviour of pupils. The appointment of your new leader for SEN has already allowed you to offer more timely support to pupils with educational, social or emotional needs. Parents state that they are happy with the communications they receive about the support their children are getting. Pupils say that they are safe and feel safe and that the school looks after them. Parents agree with these views. Scrutiny of school records shows that your behaviour and pastoral teams deal with all incidents of bullying they are aware of. Referrals to other agencies are made where necessary for further support.

Inspection findings

- Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved since the last inspection. Pupils in need of additional support are identified and support plans are put in place. These pupils are taught well. Teaching assistants make a

positive difference to improving their achievement. The new SEN coordinator has a clear knowledge of processes and routines. Communication with parents has strengthened and is effective.

- Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes within governance. The current governing body is clear about the school's strengths and key areas that need to improve. Governors have a good understanding of how well pupils in Year 11 are achieving. However, they are less clear about how well different groups of pupils in other year groups are doing. They acknowledge that, sometimes, they accept on 'face value' what leaders tell them about pupils' progress in these other year groups. This prevents them from challenging leaders effectively or holding them fully to account. As a result, strengthening the skills of governance in this respect is an important next step.
- In order to strengthen the effectiveness of middle leadership, the most successful subject leaders in the school have shared their skills and knowledge with other subject leaders. As a result, subject leaders are now increasingly effective in their individual areas of responsibility. They are more confident and skilled, for example, at evaluating pupils' progress. Although middle leaders ensure that pupils' progress across the school is checked and recorded regularly, this information is not always used to good effect to identify where further improvements to teaching or additional support are needed. Some middle leaders are not fully clear about the progress different groups of pupils are currently making, particularly in year groups other than Year 11.
- In the past, attendance has been below average. An above-average proportion of pupils were regularly absent and the proportion of pupils repeatedly excluded was higher than average. You have successfully improved all of these measures. The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved considerably. Repeat exclusions have reduced substantially. Attendance is now much closer to average as a result.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all groups of pupils, especially the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, are challenged to make consistently good progress in all year groups, particularly in English and science
- governors and middle leaders develop a good understanding of how well different groups of pupils are doing in every year group so that they can hold the school to account effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Colin Scott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My colleague and I held meetings with senior and middle leaders, the local authority and diocese, governors and parents. We also held meetings with groups of pupils in Years 7 and 10. We carried out learning walks through a number of subject areas, particularly English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, to ascertain the level of challenge pupils receive in their lessons and their engagement in them. I reviewed responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the online survey of staff views. We also looked at pupils' books and scrutinised the school's own evaluation, current school assessment information showing pupils' progress and published data from government websites. I researched the school's social media presence, its own website and local news media sites.