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Richard May
Principal
Bishop Milner Catholic College
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Dear Mr May

Short inspection of Bishop Milner Catholic College

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2018 with Gwendoline Onyon, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is a welcoming school. Leaders are ambitious to meet the needs of the communities they serve. There is a genuine desire to care for all pupils and ensure that they succeed. Relationships are strong, and pupils are conscientious, considerate and cooperative. You now provide opportunities for them to learn increasingly well and to have wider experiences outside of school. Pupils, parents, carers and staff are very supportive of leaders' work. One parent's comment is typical of many: 'This is a very good school. I am happy with the teaching and how pupils are guided academically and spiritually.'

You became principal relatively recently but you know the school well, having previously served as a senior leader. This includes a time as acting headteacher. You have worked closely with the St John Bosco Multi-Academy Company, which the school joined in 2013, with governors and with an effective and challenging school improvement partner. There is a strong network of peer leaders, and your work with primary schools is successful. Leaders are keen to learn from and share with others.

Pupils' progress at key stage 4 has been good over time. Absence and exclusions have been consistently below national averages. At the previous inspection, you were asked to focus on the performance of disadvantaged pupils. The progress made by this group of pupils is now strong and within the top 20% of schools nationally. Other key strengths include outcomes in English and the overall progress made by pupils of middle ability. In addition, the progress of students studying

vocational courses in the sixth form was strong in 2016 and 2017.

Leaders have not addressed all areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and there remain some shortcomings in school performance. These include cumbersome planning and review systems, too much subject variability, slow progress for most-able pupils and at A level. Leaders have a track record of improvement and consolidation of strengths in certain areas. There is, therefore, the capacity to address the issues that need further attention.

Pupils are a credit to you. They are polite and friendly. Pupils are supported by the promotion of Catholic values of tolerance, respect and care. These are evident in the culture and atmosphere of this forward-looking, inclusive and happy school. Leaders told inspectors that teachers have high expectations of pupils and they challenge their thinking. Leaders also said that pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. These features were consistently observed in lessons, especially in English.

During our meetings, I explained how the school website does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the school has a strong culture of safeguarding and that this is given the highest priority. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Inspectors reviewed procedures and scrutinised key documents. There was also testing of the system used to remove pupils from the school roll. Rigorous, robust and efficient systems are in place. These include checks on staff before they are employed and comprehensive training. A strong team leads on safeguarding, and staff are determined to make a difference to all pupils, particularly the more vulnerable.

All pupils spoken to by inspectors said that this is a safe school. Pupils could give examples of how they are taught to stay safe online, for instance. Inspectors observed an assembly delivered by the police, supporting pupils on how to keep safe during the summer holiday.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, governors and the school improvement partner feel that formal self-evaluation lacks necessary precision. Inspectors agree that documentation is overly detailed and should be more rigorous in addressing key issues. Nonetheless, in discussions, leaders and governors are clear about school priorities. These include stronger progress for most-able pupils, an improvement in the performance of some subjects to reduce what leaders call 'in-college variability', and addressing the recent decline in A-level performance. Leaders accept that some of these issues were raised during the 2015 inspection, but there is now an urgency to address them, and some improvements are already evident.

- There is now clear evidence of work being done to ensure that the performance of the best subjects is matched by that of others. This includes staffing changes, improvements to teaching, sharing of good practice and a focus on college-wide initiatives. There is, for instance, a literacy policy, which is consistently applied. Furthermore, in line with leaders' expectations, pupils are given more opportunities than previously to reflect on teachers' feedback and to redraft, improve and consolidate their work. The work seen in pupils' books builds on their prior knowledge.
- Pupils of all abilities are challenged to achieve their best. This is seen, for example, in their being set high progress targets. Most pupils spoken to are aware of these. Leaders' expectations of self and peer assessment in books were seen by inspectors, including in modern foreign languages. In September, leaders introduced a system call WAGOLL (What a good one looks like). This encourages teachers and pupils to model high-quality work. Evidence of pupils being successful in this was seen in books.
- In previous years, the most able pupils did not make the progress of which they were capable. In 2017, this was particularly the case in mathematics and modern foreign languages, where progress for the most able pupils was weak. Leaders provided information on how the school is prioritising the most able pupils' progress through staff training and setting work that is matched to pupils' abilities. This focus was seen in lessons, including in mathematics where, as part of the system of 'essential, impress and amaze', most-able pupils are expected to achieve the 'amaze' standard.
- Outcomes in the sixth form were mixed in 2017. Students on vocational courses made strong progress, while those studying A levels made below-average progress. Leaders have introduced targeted support for students, including ensuring that they are on the correct courses and making progress. Teaching is improving through more training and sharing of good practice. This includes using those systems seen to be effective in the rest of the school. Outcomes are carefully tracked at student and subject levels. Leaders' current assessment information for A level indicates that students' attainment is higher than previously.
- Pupils' attendance was commended in the previous inspection and it remains high. More vulnerable pupils, however, attend less well. Leaders shared information on how a relatively small number of pupils who have more challenging needs have a disproportionate impact on overall figures. Nonetheless, leaders continue to focus their efforts on those pupils whose attendance is lower than the overwhelming majority of their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- development plans are succinct, timely and sharply focused on the areas requiring further improvement
- the website is compliant and is checked on a regular basis to ensure that it

remains so

- subject variability is reduced and outcomes for the most able pupils are improved through sharing the teaching and learning strengths evident in subjects such as English
- in the sixth form, the strong achievement of pupils on vocational courses is matched by those on academic courses.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy company, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dudley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Griffiths
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, senior leaders, governors and staff. Pupils were spoken to formally and informally, including in lessons and at social times. Inspectors visited lessons, including with senior leaders, to observe learning. Inspectors looked at the quality of work in pupils' books in lessons and through a random sample provided by leaders. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner. Inspectors considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work including safeguarding, pupils' progress and attainment, self-evaluation and the development plan. Inspectors considered 57 pupil responses and 43 staff responses to the Ofsted online survey and looked at 63 responses to Parent View. The lead inspector also considered one letter written by a pupil.