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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Steve Mort
Principal
Corpus Christi Catholic College
Neville Road
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS9 0TT

Dear Mr Mort

Short inspection of Corpus Christi Catholic College

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019 with George Gilmore, 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. As principal, you are resilient and steadfast in your quest to provide the best quality of education for pupils of Halton, Wykebeck and beyond. Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas needing development at the school. There is capacity within the current senior and subject leadership teams to identify and quickly address the weaknesses in the school's provision. The school is now benefiting from more stable staffing. Roles and responsibilities of staff and leaders continue to be reviewed. In this way, you believe that the school is in a strong position to push on and improve. Inspectors agree.

The quality of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare is a significant strength. Pupils are effectively supported by an array of staff who consider and support all aspects of pupils' safety, welfare and personal development. Well-trained staff offer regular counselling sessions and one-to-one advice and guidance. For example, pupils have direct access to a safer school's police officer who is based in school. One pupil spoke for others when saying: 'We feel lucky to attend this school. The teachers really want the best for us.' Throughout the inspection, pupils were polite, engaged willingly in conversation and were eager to share their opinions in a mature manner. The school's own information, and first-hand evidence from pupils, demonstrates that instances of poor behaviour are rare. The proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed-period or permanently is well below the national average.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to spread existing best practice in teaching to ensure consistently high-quality questioning and greater challenge for the most able. In response, you have altered the way staff access training and professional development opportunities. Each week staff attend teaching and learning training that matches departmental and school priorities. In addition, staff develop their teaching skills further by listening to a range of external speakers or attending events led by Leeds Learning Partnership and the Yorkshire Teaching School Alliance. Leaders are familiar with recent research relating to effective teaching and they regularly disseminate this information to staff via weekly briefings. Many teachers ask probing questions and build upon pupils' initial responses to check and deepen their understanding. The most able pupils are now showing signs that the improving quality of teaching, learning and assessment is having a positive effect on the progress they make, particularly in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and safeguarding leaders have a well-developed understanding of the risks pupils may face. For example, staff are able to identify possible signs of abuse and understand the risks associated with pupils offending. Furthermore, staff review and identify potential risks close by such as the railway lines. During assemblies and lessons, pupils learn how they can stay safe and who they can speak to if they are worried or have a concern about themselves or a friend.

Staff attend regular safeguarding and child protection training. Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They demonstrate an appropriate understanding of the risks posed by adults and other pupils when using technology, including the internet. Pupils are able to recall and articulate learning points from a wide range of external speakers relating to knife crime, grooming and county lines (drug trafficking). Pupils say that staff monitor social times effectively and that this, along with pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the school in general, contributes to a calm and purposeful learning environment.

Inspection findings

- Many disadvantaged pupils join the school in Year 7 having joined with below-average attainment across key stage 2, particularly in reading and writing. Over time, teaching in key stages 3 and 4 has not been effective at bridging the gaps in disadvantaged pupils' literacy skills. Consequently, between 2016 and 2018 the progress of disadvantaged pupils was below average. Inspection evidence demonstrates that a minority of teachers do not have a firm understanding of the literacy needs of some disadvantaged pupils in key stage 3. This can result in a mismatch between the simplistic learning activities pupils are sometimes asked to complete and their more complicated end-of-topic assessments. Disadvantaged pupils can occasionally struggle to evidence their knowledge, skills and

understanding because they do not understand the written questions fully or because they have not improved their basic literacy skills well enough to articulate their understanding appropriately. Notwithstanding this, senior leaders have a thorough awareness of the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils may encounter. Leaders have developed a well-considered strategy that ensures more teachers are aware of the disadvantaged pupils in their class and the strategies that they can use to meet pupils' learning needs. Additionally, senior leaders have introduced 'closing the gap' meetings with staff to investigate potential academic and pastoral issues that may be having a detrimental impact on disadvantaged pupils' progress. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils receive swift and effective intervention when required. Furthermore, some disadvantaged pupils attend regular one-to-one lessons with university students that aim to develop further their understanding of English and mathematics. The school's own information and scrutiny of pupils' work highlight that leaders' recent actions are starting to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in Year 7 and 8.

- The most able pupils make strong progress across a wide range of subjects, with the exception of humanities. In 2018, the most able pupils made above-average progress in mathematics, English and modern foreign languages. Most teachers have high expectations and demand the best from their pupils. The most able pupils usually respond well to incisive teacher assessment and effective questioning. This, in addition to helpful support and challenge from teaching assistants, is contributing to the most able pupils sustaining their high standards overall and improving the progress they make in humanities this academic year.
- Leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. Leaders have recently amended the curriculum for pupils with SEND to ensure that it more closely matches pupils' starting points and prepares them for life beyond school. Pupils with SEND are well known to staff. This, and regular staff training, ensures that the additional needs of pupils with SEND are considered when teachers plan learning activities. Pupils with SEND have high ambitions, a clear understanding of what their next steps will be after school and, currently, make good progress over time.
- Rates of attendance are improving and persistent absence is reducing. In the last academic year, pupils' attendance was broadly in line with the national average. However, disadvantaged pupils attend less often than their peers and other pupils nationally. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils are more likely than other pupils to be absent from school for long periods of time. Leaders know that improving the attendance of all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, is an important and pressing aspect of the school's work that needs to improve further. Consequently, leaders have started holding 'parent surgeries' with parents and carers to discuss pupils' learning, progress and attendance. Furthermore, an attendance minibuss is available each day to support pupils who may be unable to commute to school. Rates of attendance this academic year demonstrate that improvements in pupils' attendance over time are likely to be sustained further.
- Some senior leaders are new to the school or to their roles. Without exception, they are passionate and beginning to develop a clear rationale for the work that they are involved in. Senior leaders' strategies to improve the school are mostly

well considered and rooted in research or compelling evidence. However, sometimes, leaders' ambitions to complete large-scale tasks swiftly reduce the time they spend reviewing the effectiveness of their actions. Consequently, leaders do not always realise that some actions or strategies are more successful at improving pupils' learning and outcomes than others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to build on the school's recent work to improve the attendance and progress of disadvantaged pupils
- support teachers to develop pupils' reading and writing skills in key stage 3, particularly for those pupils who are disadvantaged or who joined with below-average attainment across key stage 2
- regularly review the effectiveness of their work with a focus on the impact their actions are having on the learning and outcomes of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, inspectors met with you and other members of the leadership team. We accompanied senior leaders during observations in classrooms and together we evaluated pupils' learning. Inspectors met with governors, a representative from the local authority, subject leaders and pupils. I spoke on the telephone with the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds. Prior to the inspection, I analysed the school's website and evaluated a wide range of additional documentation. During the inspection, inspectors evaluated safeguarding arrangements, including the record of suitability checks on staff, safeguarding policies and associated files, and attendance records. Inspectors reviewed assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress, as well as leaders' action plans and evaluations. Inspectors and senior leaders scrutinised the books of 50 pupils across a wide range of subjects. Seventy-three parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Sixty-two members of staff responded to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. All of these responses were taken into consideration. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.