

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 March 2020

Miss Lisa Corrigan
St Gabriel's RC High School
Bridge Road
Bury
Lancashire
BL9 0TZ

Dear Miss Corrigan

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Gabriel's RC High School

Following my visit with Philip Wood, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2019.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2019.

- Significantly develop the quality of leadership and management at all levels so that teaching and pupils' outcomes rapidly improve by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels have the knowledge, skills and understanding to improve the quality of education in their areas
 - leaders communicate a clear vision for the school, which is underpinned by high expectations, to staff, pupils, parents and carers
 - leaders improve their evaluation of the school's work so that they gain an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and are able to hold staff at all levels to account for the quality of pupils' learning
 - the criteria leaders use to measure the impact of their improvement strategies are closely linked to pupils' achievements and personal development
 - teachers receive the careful guidance, advice and training that will enable them to plan learning that caters effectively for pupils' needs
 - teachers are supported to develop higher expectations of what pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, are capable of achieving
 - all pupils, particularly boys, are supported to embrace the school's ethos and values so that behaviour out of lessons improves and pupils develop consistently positive attitudes to their learning in the classroom
 - teachers provide pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with the support that they need to learn well
 - leaders continue to develop the curriculum in order to better meet the needs of all pupils and strengthen provision for their personal development
 - leaders use the findings of the recent review of the pupil premium to improve rapidly the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 25 to 26 February 2020

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of subject leaders and a group of staff. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and the chief executive officer (CEO) of St Theresa of Calcutta's multi-academy trust, who is also a representative of the Diocese of Salford. Inspectors made short visits to a range of lessons and looked at pupils' work. Many of these visits were made jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils when they visited classrooms. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at break, at lunchtime and in classrooms. Inspectors also met formally with two groups of pupils to discuss their views of the school. Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including records of pupils' behaviour and attendance. They also reviewed the school's safeguarding policies and practices and checked the single central record.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant changes in leadership and staffing. In July 2019, 11 members of staff left the school. Seven members of staff joined the school in September 2019. The acting headteacher, who was present at the last inspection, left in 2019. A new interim headteacher led the school from April 2019 to July 2019. The current headteacher was seconded to the school from June 2019 for two days a week. She was appointed in a substantive role from September 2019. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was also appointed in September 2019. A new head of science was appointed in the autumn term of 2019. A new assistant headteacher and a head of physical education (PE) were appointed in January 2020. The assistant headteacher is responsible for teaching and learning. Three members of staff have been seconded to the senior leadership team in order to develop their leadership skills and strengthen the capacity of the senior team. The deputy headteacher together with the second in department in mathematics are leading this subject area on a temporary basis. A new head of mathematics has been appointed and will join the school after Easter 2020.

The school is about to embark upon a building programme to extend the dining hall and create an outside canopy area for pupils to use at breaktimes.

The local authority replaced the governing body with an IEB in July 2019. Following the last inspection, the Department for Education issued an academy order. Leaders have secured sponsorship from St Theresa of Calcutta's multi-academy trust. Leaders are planning for the school to become an academy and join the trust on 1 June 2020.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Senior leaders responded quickly to the concerns raised at the previous inspection about pupils' poor behaviour. Staff and pupils reported to inspectors that behaviour has improved. Pupils spoke positively about the rewards system and said that teachers apply the behaviour policy more consistently than in the past. In lessons, pupils generally demonstrated positive attitudes to learning. Most pupils want to learn. Inspectors saw very few occurrences of low-level disruption in their visits to lessons. Most pupils behave well at social times. They are polite and respectful to each other and adults. The corridors near the dining hall can become congested during social times. High levels of staff supervision help to ensure a calm and orderly atmosphere around the school.

The school's records show that behaviour is improving as pupils respond to leaders' higher expectations. However, there is a small minority of Year 10 pupils who have higher rates of exclusion. Leaders are using their behaviour records to identify where and when misbehaviour happens. They are providing appropriate support to subject teachers to secure good behaviour from all pupils.

Examination results for 2019 show that pupils did not make good progress from their starting points. Pupils' progress was weak in mathematics, science and some other subjects. This was partly due to weaknesses of subject curriculums and their implementation. Senior leaders are working with subject leaders and staff to improve pupil achievement in these subjects as a priority. Pupils made broadly average progress in English and humanities. The proportion of pupils attaining a standard pass was above average in 2019.

Leaders are beginning to have a positive effect on the quality of education that current pupils receive. There has been a strong focus on improving the delivery of the curriculum in all subjects. Pupils said that teaching has improved and that learning in lessons is more structured than it has been in the past. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are increasing. However, leaders know that there is more to do to make sure that all subject curriculums enable pupils to achieve well.

Leaders have reviewed the whole-school curriculum and made a number of changes to ensure that it better meets pupils' needs. For example, from September 2020, the time devoted to computing, English, mathematics and science has been reviewed to ensure that pupils' studies in these subjects have greater depth and breadth.

Leaders recognise that subject curriculums need to be strengthened. Some current subject plans are not well planned and do not allow pupils to acquire knowledge in sufficient depth. In some subjects, pupils are not able to build on their prior learning. Subject leaders are taking action to improve schemes of work. For example, the new leader of science is adjusting the current curriculum to ensure that pupils are able to fill any gaps in their knowledge.

Senior leaders are working with subject leaders to develop new curriculum plans in all subjects. This work is being supported by closer work with primary schools, a local teaching school alliance and external consultants. Subject leaders have thought carefully about what pupils need to learn and are reviewing the order of topics. The plans for some subjects in Year 7 and Year 10 have been completed. Plans for all subjects, and across all year groups, are due to be completed in the summer term.

The newly appointed SENCo is making staff more aware of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff receive clearer information on how to help pupils with SEND. The SENCo has provided training sessions to help staff better understand the needs of pupils with visual impairments. Pupils with SEND are increasingly well supported.

Despite previous leaders' actions, examination results for 2019 show that disadvantaged pupils underachieved significantly. The headteacher has sharpened plans to improve the support for these pupils. Teachers know who the disadvantaged pupils are, and their learning is more closely checked. The headteacher has recently strengthened the leadership of this area by appointing three additional leaders to work with staff and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders know that there is much more to do to enable these pupils to learn more and remember more as they move through the school.

Leaders are in the process of developing a wider range of opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils can take on more responsibility through being mental health and anti-bullying ambassadors. They also have access to a wider range of enrichment activities, such as British Sign Language, martial arts and cheerleading.

In 2019, pupils' attendance and persistent absence were broadly in line with the national averages. Leaders appointed two pastoral managers to improve the monitoring of attendance. Leaders and staff are working more closely with families and have improved the role of form tutors and heads of year in following up absences.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, together with her newly formed senior leadership team, are taking determined action to move the school forward. The headteacher has a clear vision and wants to raise pupils' aspirations and provide them with more opportunities.

The headteacher has her finger on the pulse of the school. She has improved the evaluation of the schools' work. Plans for improvement provide a clear response to the areas identified at the previous inspection. The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been reviewed and revised. This has brought greater clarity and accountability. The headteacher has developed and communicated clear expectations to all staff and pupils. She has not shied away from making difficult

leadership decisions in the best interests of pupils. This is evident in the improvement in behaviour and the way staff are held to account for pupils' learning.

Staff feel that the school is moving in the right direction. Their morale is high. Staff value the way leaders consider their workload when introducing changes. Pupils are positive about the changes made by the headteacher. For example, they said that painting all corridors in the school has 'given them a lift'.

Staff spoke highly of the training opportunities that they now receive. Senior leaders and subject leaders who are new to role are developing their skills. They need more time to show impact. The newly appointed assistant headteacher for teaching and learning has brought a fresh approach and is committed to improving the implementation of the curriculum across the school. Leaders use the support and advice of external experts well to promote school improvement.

Since October 2019, some pupils in Year 11 have been receiving additional subject support instead of core PE lessons. This is to help these pupils catch up with lost learning in the past. Year 11 pupils who spoke to inspectors were positive about the additional subject support that they are receiving during their core PE time. Leaders have plans to ensure that no Year 11 pupils in future are removed from core PE.

Members of the IEB have a wide range of experience and know the school well. They are committed to the school improving. They provide appropriate levels of challenge and support to senior leaders. Some members of the IEB work alongside senior leaders to improve specific areas, such as the impact of pupil premium funding. Members of the IEB know that leaders still have a lot to do to improve the quality of education.

Safeguarding arrangements remain effective. Leaders have improved the security of the school site and premises. Appropriate checks are conducted to ensure that all staff are safe to work with pupils. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe. They know whom they can talk to if they have any worries. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with any concerns quickly.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The new headteacher, with the support of her senior leaders, members of the IEB, the Diocese of Salford and the local authority, has made a positive start in a short space of time.
- Leaders have secured significant improvements in the behaviour of pupils, particularly boys, in lessons and around the school. This has improved the conditions for pupils' learning.
- Leaders have raised their expectations of teachers and pupils. This is helping to improve the delivery of the curriculum and pupils' achievement.

- Subject leaders are committed to making the curriculum changes needed to help pupils learn more and remember more.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- While improving, the quality of education varies across the school. Some current subject plans are not sequenced correctly and are not detailed enough for pupils to build their knowledge and skills over time. Leaders have started to evaluate and develop new subject curriculums. This is at an early stage of development.
- The recommendations from the review of the pupil premium are being implemented. While there are some signs of recent improvement, disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well they as they should.

External support

The school has benefited from strong support from the local authority adviser and from the Diocese of Salford. The CEO of St Theresa of Calcutta's multi-academy trust is providing strategic support for leaders. The school is receiving effective support from Loreto Teaching School Alliance, through a 'school-to-school' support programme. The school employs three consultants, who are supporting senior leaders and subject leaders with developing the quality of education. The school also has useful links with other local schools, which are used well to support school improvement.