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10 May 2021

David Hayes
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Dear Mr Hayes

Additional monitoring inspection of St Francis Xavier's College

Following my inspection with Mark Quinn, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), Emma Gregory (HMI) and William Smith (HMI) to your school on 16 and 17 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 to provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require improvement.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, most of Ofsted's monitoring inspections are being carried out remotely. This monitoring inspection was initially carried out remotely. However, it moved to an on-site visit on 17 March 2021 due to significant concerns about leadership and management.

During the inspection of your school, serious concerns were identified. These related to the school's culture of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of routine inspections, we have not treated this inspection as a section 5 inspection, as would be our usual practice. The safeguarding concerns identified have been reported to the local authority (LA) and the regional schools commissioner. The school will be prioritised for a further inspection as soon as possible.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in May 2018.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are not taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

Safeguarding is not effective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that staff and pupils uphold a school culture of safeguarding and good behaviour where:
 - pupils can feel safe and secure as they learn
 - there is individual and group responsibility from leaders, staff and pupils that secures the highest possible standards of behaviour
 - ensure that the school's records of instances of poor behaviour are comprehensive and support staff in managing pupils' behaviour
- rapidly rebuild the confidence of parents, carers, staff and other members of the school community in the work of the school
- ensure that all education staff understand and act upon their responsibility to provide the highest possible quality of education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Context

- There have been significant changes to staffing since the start of the previous school year. The previous permanent headteacher left the school. A senior leader has temporarily acted as headteacher. You have been appointed to start as headteacher in the summer term 2021. At the time of this inspection, you were already doing some work at the school in your role as headteacher designate. A deputy headteacher was seconded to the school long term. An acting deputy headteacher has been permanently appointed to this role. A middle leader has temporarily been promoted to the role of assistant headteacher. Two senior leaders have left the school. In addition, 12 teachers have left the school and been replaced by 10 other teachers. A new governor has been appointed. A new vice-chair of the governing body and a new governor with oversight of safeguarding have recently been appointed from within the governing body.
- Approximately four fifths of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils earlier in the spring term 2021. Roughly one third

of vulnerable pupils and one seventh of pupils with an education, health and care plan attended on site over this period.

- At the time of this inspection, nearly all pupils were attending school on site.

Main findings

- Over time, various leaders of this school have allowed a culture to develop that too readily accepts poor behaviour and negative attitudes from pupils. You have given recent support to leaders and governors to improve the curriculum. Despite this, historically, they have not ensured that the broad education provided, including about how pupils should relate to others, is consistently effective. This situation was not helped by recent turbulence in leadership. Parents and carers lack confidence in the work of the school.
- The culture of safeguarding in the school is not strong enough. Pupils told us that they are not confident enough to share any concerns or worries with staff. Pupils said that this was even more difficult while working remotely. In addition, they explained that homophobic and other discriminatory language is used by pupils and excused as 'banter'.
- Younger pupils told us that they felt pressure to conform to a culture that accepts poor behaviour. We saw pupils unwilling to engage with their learning and distracting others in class.
- Staff shared their concerns about pupils' attitudes and behaviour with us. They said that the use of discriminatory language between pupils and to staff is commonplace. This includes disrespectful comments to, and about, female members of staff. Staff do not always report any instances of inappropriate comments from pupils. This is because they lack confidence in the effectiveness of leaders' actions to resolve concerns when they are raised.
- Senior leaders believe that, in the past, teachers passed concerns about poor behaviour too quickly onto senior leaders. Leaders have recently raised the expectations about how teachers should manage pupils' behaviour. Leaders maintain records of incidents of poor behaviour. However, these do not capture a complete picture of the extent of such incidents as experienced by pupils. As a result, they do not have a full understanding of the weaknesses in pupils' behaviour or the impact that this has on other pupils and staff.
- Prior to spring 2020, senior leaders and other staff reviewed the curriculum. You have clear expectations about how teachers will help pupils to learn well. Subject plans outline how pupils will build their knowledge systematically. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to be reminded of what they know. Middle leaders and teachers made some adaptations to their approach during the recent period when the school was closed to most pupils. For example, teachers provided packs of art materials for pupils so that they could complete art activities using different media at home. Teachers continue to provide resources, including online learning, for any pupils who must work remotely.

- Prior to all pupils returning to school, middle leaders and teachers checked what subject knowledge pupils remembered of their earlier learning. They used this information to plan what knowledge to focus on as pupils returned to school. Teachers continue to identify any gaps in pupils' subject knowledge and to address these.
- Senior leaders have carefully considered how to assess pupils in Years 11 and 13 to support them as they prepare for their GCSE and A-level qualifications. All pupils in Year 11 are entered for a vocational qualification in sports science. Some pupils said that they did not understand why they were entered for this qualification. We could not establish that the reasons for the school using this qualification are in pupils' best interests.
- Senior leaders take a positive approach to encouraging pupils to read. Staff check the reading ages of pupils in Years 7 to 9, provide reading books that are matched to pupils' reading ability and encourage use of the school's library. Pupils who find reading difficult get extra support to develop their phonics knowledge from a group of specially trained staff. You intend to extend this training to all staff.
- Over half of all parents of pupils with SEND who contacted us are dissatisfied with the support their children receive. You told us that improvement to the school's SEND work has been slower than to other aspects. The school's recent plans to improve this provision focus largely on improving documentation. Leaders have not done enough to ensure that staff, including classroom teachers, can help pupils with SEND. Staff have considered how to address the additional needs of vulnerable pupils. For example, you provide information intended to help pupils with mental health needs. Leaders have recently arranged for a counsellor to provide face-to-face support to such pupils.
- Over time, governors have not been able to prevent concerns arising from parents, pupils and staff. Governors are aware of the challenges facing the school. They acted swiftly in response to a recent, high-profile safeguarding issue. The recent changes to the governing body have helped governors gain a clearer view of the school. In the past, governors have not challenged leaders sufficiently about weaker aspects of the school's work.
- In the past, leaders made little use of support from other agencies, including some LA services available to the school. This has now started to change. For example, you have arranged for the school to take part in a Department for Education funded project aimed at improving the school's SEND provision. In addition, subject leaders are increasingly becoming involved with colleagues from other schools as they consider effective approaches to the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was initially conducted remotely but moved to an on-site visit due to concerns about leadership and management. We held remote meetings with you and other senior leaders; groups of subject leaders, teachers and pupils; members

of the governing body; representatives of the LA; and an independent education professional who works with the school to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We held further face-to-face meetings with groups of pupils and staff. An inspector toured the school site. We held discussions with senior leaders about leadership and management, behaviour and safeguarding.

We examined documents concerning safeguarding and other aspects of leadership, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, and scrutinised the school's records about behaviour, bullying and complaints received from parents. We looked at 131 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 94 free-text responses, and 49 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector