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Stuart Wetson
Headteacher
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Lugwardine
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Dear Mr Wetson

No formal designation inspection of St. Mary's RC High School

Following my inspection with Deborah Jenkins, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 20 April 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for no formal designation (NFD) inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about pupils' personal development, and the effectiveness of leadership and management (including governance) at the school.

We do not give graded judgements on these inspections. Under normal circumstances, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection of the school is likely to be a section 5 inspection and be brought forward. If we identify significant concerns, normally we will deem the inspection as being completed under section 5 of the Act.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education.

Priorities for further improvement:

- leaders should provide training to ensure that all teachers who deliver relationships and sex education (RSE) are confident and well equipped to deal with any sensitive and/or contentious issues that may be raised by pupils
- leaders should refine curriculum planning for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education to ensure pupils have sufficient time to explore some topics in more depth, enabling them to build on their knowledge more successfully.

Context

- St. Mary's RC High School is a voluntary aided Catholic secondary school with 750 pupils on roll. It is part of the Archdiocese of Cardiff. There is a low rate of pupil mobility. The school is over-subscribed.
- Since the last inspection, eight teachers, including a deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, have left the school. Teachers have been replaced. The deputy headteacher role has not been replaced, but instead the responsibilities of the role have been shared across the existing assistant headteachers.
- 92% of pupils were learning remotely when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. 44% of vulnerable pupils and 26% of pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site. Currently, almost every pupil is attending school on site.

Main findings

- Ofsted received concerns that the school's current RSE programme encourages misogynistic and discriminatory attitudes. Inspectors were not able to see the implementation of the current RSE curriculum as it was not fully up and running due to the pandemic. However, the evidence gathered indicates that the way leaders intend to implement the RSE programme will not promote misogynistic or discriminatory attitudes, nor will it endorse messages that are contrary to the Equality Act 2010.
- The school's teaching plans show that pupils will be taught a range of appropriate content as part of their RSE curriculum. Teachers use and adapt a variety of resources to suit pupils' needs. The school changed some of the language used in one of the original pilot RSE materials that it had been asked to use by the Archdiocese of Cardiff because of concerns about how the roles and responsibilities of men and women within relationships were described. The school identified this early on and took swift action to change the language. Leaders have made sure that the school's planned RSE programme, which is on track to be fully implemented by September 2021,

has been carefully mapped against the requirements of the Department for Education's latest guidance.

- Leaders ensured that they consulted on the RSE curriculum with parents, staff and pupils before its implementation. Despite the significant recent media coverage, there have been no official parental complaints.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive an appropriate PSHE curriculum. PSHE education comprises a broad range of suitable content to support all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, in leading healthy, active lives. Leaders keep the PSHE curriculum under regular review to make sure that it meets the current needs of pupils. When necessary, they adapt the curriculum in response to feedback or internal reviews.
- The PSHE programme, including RSE, is taught by form teachers. Staff have undertaken varying levels of training in the delivery of RSE. However, a few staff do not have the depth of knowledge to answer confidently some questions posed by pupils. When this happens, pupils' questions are sometimes not fully answered. Leaders are aware of this issue and have already started to consider staff's training needs.
- Within the RSHE curriculum, pupils learn about the Catholic faith perspective on relationships and sex, although pupils also engage in debating topics that take into account the perspectives of others. Pupils are taught to understand that while not everyone shares the same beliefs and values, it is important to respect the viewpoints of others. This was confirmed by pupils we spoke to. This is consistent with the school's ethos and responsibility to promote fundamental British values.
- Leaders made a conscious decision not to teach RSE remotely during national lockdowns. Instead they provided learning activities on topics such as mental health, online safety and coping with anxiety. Leaders intend to reintroduce RSE lessons later this term. Teachers have reordered curriculum content so they can prioritise what will be most important for pupils to learn. In the case of Year 11, for example, this includes a topic on the concept of consent.
- Despite there being a clear sequence of learning for PSHE, occasionally teachers move pupils onto the next topic too quickly before pupils have had time to consolidate their learning and get a real depth of understanding. This means that pupils can find it harder to retain what has been learned.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well across the curriculum. Teachers embed planned learning opportunities in different subjects, such as science and geography. Through the school's ethos, leaders have created a culture of acceptance and inclusivity.
- Leaders have established clear procedures that enable pupils to report any concerns they may have if they feel that they had been treated unfairly or

discriminated against. School records show that this type of behaviour is rare, and if it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by leaders. Pupils say they feel respected and safe at school. They know trustworthy staff who they can go to if they have any concerns or worries.

- Governors have a good strategic oversight of the school's work in relation to the PSHE curriculum. They have ensured that the school has regard to the relevant statutory guidance for RSE. If there are any concerns raised about governance, matters are fully investigated to ensure that those responsible for governance are suitable to hold the position of school governor.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted on site due to concerns about leadership and management and the education being provided to pupils during the current circumstances.

We met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, a representative from the Archdiocese of Cardiff, and representatives of those responsible for governance.

We also visited lessons and observed form time, scrutinised curriculum planning and resources, school policies, audits relating to RSE, governors' meeting minutes and behaviour records, and explored aspects of safeguarding.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector