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Peter Tite
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Tite

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady and St John Catholic College

Following my visit to your school on 30 June 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

The school continues to require improvement. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action toward the school becoming a good school.

Leaders should take further action to:

- support subject leaders to complete their curriculum thinking and establish the essential knowledge that pupils must learn in all subject areas
- develop their assessment strategies so that teachers can check how well pupils have

learned the intended knowledge outlined in the curriculum, particularly in key stage 3

- ensure that those pupils who are behind with their reading knowledge or are at the early stages of learning to read catch up quickly with their peers.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a number of new subject leaders, teachers and support staff have joined the school. Several governors have joined, or are in the process of joining, the governing body.

Main findings

You and your leadership team are making the necessary changes to improve the quality of education for pupils at Our Lady and St John Catholic College. Despite the many challenges caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, you are taking swift and effective action to improve the curriculum for pupils.

You and other leaders have overhauled the overarching aims of the school's curriculum. You are in the process of making further refinements to ensure that the curriculum is suitably broad and ambitious for pupils in all key stages. For example, you are ensuring that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), access the same curriculum as their peers. In addition, in key stage 4, you have ensured that all pupils have equal access to an academic curriculum. For example, all pupils can study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects, should they wish to do so.

You and your senior leadership team are ensuring that all subject leaders have the resources and expertise that they require to develop further their curriculum thinking. Subject leaders are currently identifying the essential knowledge that pupils should learn. They are also thinking carefully about the order in which teachers deliver new curriculum content to pupils. This is helping pupils to build upon their prior learning. However, the work to identify what pupils must learn is ongoing. Some curriculum areas are further along the journey of improvement than others. With this in mind, you are ensuring that subject leaders receive appropriate support to design and develop high-quality curriculums for pupils.

Leaders' systems for assessing how well pupils have learned the knowledge in the curriculum are not always used effectively by teachers. This is because, in some subjects, leaders are still in the process of identifying exactly what pupils must learn. As a result, some teachers do not consistently identify misconceptions in pupils' learning, particularly in key stage 3. This continues to hinder how well some pupils achieve in some subjects.

You identified that teachers require further guidance about how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to support the specific needs of pupils with SEND. You and other leaders have developed appropriate ways to share pertinent information about these pupils' specific needs. Subject leaders and teachers are thinking more carefully about how to

adapt the content of the curriculum for pupils with SEND as they continue to design their curriculums.

Reading is increasingly a priority for leaders. You have placed a clear focus on developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary and oracy skills. You are also beginning to promote a love of reading across the school. For example, leaders are ensuring that pupils have access to culturally diverse texts and devoted time for reading when they can read for pleasure.

More recently, leaders have been focusing on how to support those pupils that are behind in their reading or are at the early stages of learning to read. Some of these pupils are not catching up quickly enough with their peers. You are prioritising staff's training in this area to ensure that these pupils receive the support and help that they need to improve their reading fluency and accuracy. However, it is too early to see the impact of your actions.

You and the senior leadership team benefit from the support and challenge that is being provided by members of the governing body. For example, governors have a firmer understanding of the rationale for the subjects on offer to pupils through the school's curriculum. Governors are asking leaders more challenging questions about how well the curriculum is being designed and how effectively it is meeting pupils' needs, particularly in key stage 3.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, you and your governing body have successfully focused your efforts on enhancing the provision to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health. This aspect of your work is a strength.

Additional support

Staff value the targeted support and training that they have received from external partners to improve the design and delivery of the curriculum. Furthermore, you have sought an external review of your curriculum developments. This is helping you, your senior leaders and members of the governing body to verify improvements to the quality of education across the school. This support is also helping to identify and prioritise areas for further improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and with other senior leaders. I also met with pupils and staff. In addition, I met with representatives of those responsible for governance, representatives of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Salford to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I discussed the curriculum with the subject leaders of science, English, physical education, geography and modern foreign languages. I met with the leaders responsible for the curriculum, literacy and pupils with SEND. I visited a sample of lessons with the headteacher. I met a group of pupils from Years 8 and 10 to discuss their experiences of

school life. I looked at samples of pupils' work. I examined a range of documentation, including the school development plan and records of visits by external advisers. I checked the single central record and met with leaders responsible for safeguarding.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Downing
Her Majesty's Inspector