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Mr Michael Antram
Headteacher
St Edward's Roman Catholic/Church of England School, Poole
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Dear Mr Antram

Short inspection of St Edward's Roman Catholic/Church of England School, Poole

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 2017 with Martin Watson, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The strong leadership you have provided since you took on the post of headteacher at the start of this school year is resulting in an increased pace of improvement. You have the full support of staff, pupils and parents. You have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This understanding, and your determination that every pupil will achieve, is leading to effective change.

Pupils throughout the school make good progress. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and led to more consistent outcomes for pupils and students at GCSE and A level. You are aware that in previous years disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils have not made as much progress as other pupils in the school. You have put in place a range of measures to address this. For example, disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress in English and mathematics because leaders use additional funding to support them more effectively. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well catered for.

Teachers are dedicated and committed. They are responding positively to the changes put in place to raise expectations and improve the learning environment. However, these raised expectations are still not consistently applied. Consequently, the work provided for pupils is sometimes not challenging enough. Pupils are confident, well behaved and proud of their school. They know they can rely on the support of their teachers.

Although the sixth form faces increased competition from other schools and colleges in the area, it remains the natural choice for most pupils in Year 11. Current students speak highly of the quality of teaching and support they receive from their teachers. You are addressing the variation in students' progress in different subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and the school's leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All records are detailed and of good quality. School leaders, governors, teachers and other staff have created a caring community that keeps pupils safe and well looked after.

Recent developments, including more attention to the security of the site, have added to pupils' confidence in their own safety. They have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and are fully aware of the risks they may face in the world today, including the threat of extremism, drug abuse and sexual exploitation.

The nominated safeguarding governor meets regularly with the school's safeguarding lead to evaluate the effectiveness of arrangements. All staff are fully aware of their responsibilities as a result of regular and effective training.

Inspection findings

- To check that the school remains good, my first line of enquiry was to look at pupils' progress across a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Most pupils currently on roll make good progress. The positive climate for learning encourages their ambition to succeed. Pupils' attainment in GCSE English and GCSE mathematics was in line with the national average in 2016. The school's assessment information indicates that current Year 11 pupils' attainment is higher. Although pupils' work is often of a high standard, they are sometimes set work which is not sufficiently challenging. Further work needs to be done to ensure that more pupils, including the most able, are fully stretched. Year 7 pupils commented that some of the work was not harder than work they had done in Year 6, and some GCSE pupils said they could do better than the targets they had been set.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and play a significant part in their good progress. They are keen to learn and engage fully with classroom activities. They are encouraged to reflect on their work and respond to their teachers' advice. Pupils have the confidence to ask questions and work well with one another.
- My second line of enquiry explored the effectiveness of leadership in monitoring and developing the quality of teaching in the school. Due to changes in the school's admissions policy, pupils in the current Year 10 were the first group to join the school in Year 7. Previously, pupils did not join until Year 8. Therefore, leaders have focused on developing the quality of teaching in key stage 3. As teachers have adjusted to lower-school classes, the quality of teaching has become less variable. Staff appreciate the regular, high-quality training they receive and value the excellent relationships that exist at all levels.

- My third line of enquiry focused on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The school's approach to identifying and supporting disadvantaged pupils in the classroom is rigorous. Current assessment information shows that these pupils are now making more progress than their peers in both English and mathematics. Teachers are becoming more skilled at working with individual pupils and identifying appropriate support and intervention. Disadvantaged pupils now feel motivated to learn well. There is a large number of children looked after on roll. Their poor attendance has been tackled well and their attendance is currently above the national average.
- My final line of enquiry looked at students' progress in the sixth form. Current students mostly make good progress. The school offers a wide range of A-level subjects and a wide range of enrichment activities. All students have access to good, impartial careers advice. Nonetheless, results in different subject areas vary too much. Leaders are determined to ensure greater consistency where students have similar starting points. Although students are very appreciative of the teaching and support they receive in the sixth form, they are rightly concerned that some staff expect more of them than others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching provides sufficient challenge for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, so that they make the best possible progress
- the quality of teaching is more consistent across all subjects, including in the sixth form.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Steward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors observed learning in classrooms and visited several areas around the school to observe pupils' behaviour. Most lesson observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. We looked at pupils' work and talked to them to seek their views about their learning. Inspectors looked at the quality of work in a wide range of pupils' exercise books and sixth form students' files. We met with a group of pupils at lunchtime to talk about their experiences of school life and spoke with others during break.

Meetings were held with senior leaders, the designated leaders for safeguarding and attendance, the SENCo and head of sixth form, middle leaders and a group of governors. We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plans. Inspectors also considered the views of the 175 parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including 21 with additional comments, and the views of the 37 staff who completed the online staff survey.