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Stephen Godber
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Godber

Short inspection of St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Rob Steed, 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. As acting headteacher, you have created a very clear leadership structure. All leaders, managers and teachers are fully aware of their responsibilities. You and the governors hold all staff to account with considerable rigour. Teachers and leaders at all levels are enthusiastic and ambitious. You ensure that they have very high expectations of themselves. Similarly, high standards are expected of pupils in both their academic achievement and behaviour. Staff commitment is summed up in the English translation of the school's motto, 'Only the best is good enough'.

Pupils also respond well to this commitment. Almost all of those who talked with inspectors said that the best thing about the school was the teachers. Leaders, other staff and pupils work together to create a calm, purposeful and hard-working atmosphere.

Around the school, there are many examples where teaching is leading to pupils' excellent achievement. You have instilled in the staff a desire to do the best they can. At the last inspection, checking the progress of students in the sixth form to quickly address anyone at risk of underachieving was an area identified for improvement. This aspect has improved, but there is still work to be done before students in the sixth form perform as well as they should.

You and other senior leaders are open and honest in your evaluation of the school. You know its strengths and weaknesses very well. This means that you have been able to take determined action to improve less strong aspects. Pupils make similar progress to their peers with the same starting points nationally across a range of subjects. Attainment in all subjects is high. However, you know that the progress made by certain groups of pupils is not as good as it should be. This is the case for disadvantaged pupils, especially those with low prior attainment, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Collectively, these groups make up a small number of pupils but you accept that, in order for the school to be outstanding, such variance between groups should be addressed.

The school's website is easily accessible and gives a range of pertinent information. The school's portal is valued by parents as a means of communication and many parents spoke highly of the parents' evenings and how professional they find teachers and leaders to be.

Governors have a clear understanding of where they want the school to be. Governors' work with individual departments is commendable and it provides them with an accurate view about the quality of provision within each subject area. Governors are honest in recognising where the school could be even better and share in the constant desire to improve in order to serve the pupils and the local community. Evidence of this can be seen in their rigorous procedures to appoint a new headteacher from the start of next term.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that the arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Their records about safeguarding are detailed and comprehensive. Staff training is wide-ranging, which means that adults in school are confident about what they should do if they identify any concerns. Those senior leaders and governors involved in appointing staff receive additional training.

The school's child protection policy is based on a model provided by the local authority and it is openly available on the school website for any parent or other person who may need to access it.

Leaders know who to call on should they need additional advice about safeguarding matters. There is good communication with staff from the local authority regarding particular safeguarding issues.

The pupils we spoke to told us that they feel safe in school and that they are taught about the things they need to know to protect themselves. There are well-organised arrangements for pupils to seek help should they feel they need it.

Inspection findings

- Pupils make progress in line with their peers nationally across a range of subjects. Attainment is significantly above average in all subjects. Achievement in

the humanities and languages is particularly impressive. The progress of current pupils, especially boys, indicates that outcomes for all year groups will remain strong.

- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils, especially those with low prior attainment, and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not as quick as it should be. These are small cohorts but their underperformance impacts on the overall headline figures of how well pupils achieve. The recent appointment of a pupil premium learning progression coach is already demonstrating a positive impact on the progress made by targeted pupils. However, leaders still recognise that the rigour with which the performance of disadvantaged pupils is addressed is variable. In almost all subjects, disadvantaged pupils, particularly those with low prior attainment, make weak progress.
- You and the senior leadership team have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of outcomes and teaching in the sixth form. Appropriate actions to improve weaknesses are being taken and are beginning to demonstrate improvement.
- Your own records indicate that the majority of teaching is consistently good or better. The outcomes of pupils would support this view but the achievement of the aforementioned groups of pupils lags behind that of others. The work we saw in pupils' books and the information you made available to us support your evaluation that teaching across subjects and year groups is further improving and learning is mainly good or better. However, senior and middle leaders recognise the need to increase opportunities for staff to share the best practice in school in order to develop a higher level of consistency.
- The governing body provides excellent guidance and leadership of the school. Its members have a wide range of high-level skills, including strategic institutional management. Governors are very well informed and hold you and other school leaders to account.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that actions are taken to:

- accelerate rates of progress for students in the sixth form, for pupils across the rest of the school who are disadvantaged, especially those who have low prior attainment, and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- develop greater consistency of teaching, reflecting the best practice in school.

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

Yours sincerely

Steven Cartlidge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors held meetings with you, your deputy and the assistant headteachers. We also met with groups of pupils and two members of the governing body. We met with a group of teachers and middle leaders. I also met with the school improvement partner. School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching. We visited classrooms with your leaders to speak with pupils, look at their books and observe their learning. I examined child protection information. I took account of the 111 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of the views of the 142 parents who texted me and the one who wrote a letter. I spoke to one parent on the telephone.