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Mr Carlo Cuomo
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Dear Mr Cuomo

Short inspection of Christ The King Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2018 with Andrew Hunt, 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your leadership provides a clear-sighted focus on improving GCSE results. You combine this with a deep-seated moral commitment to serving the needs of young people in the area, especially the most vulnerable. A strong ethos permeates the school. Pupils learn and grow in a caring, strongly inclusive environment. The school caters for a wide range of pupils' needs. A typical comment from a parent reflects this commitment to inclusion, stating: 'A very good school that values its students and sees them as individuals.' Pupils behave well and are respectful towards each other, staff and visitors.

You and other senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You are making good progress in tackling the areas that need attention. The senior team works well together. It has been successful in driving forward whole-school priorities that are linked to the quality of teaching. As a consequence, teachers have a shared vision of what needs to be improved. They understand their responsibilities in making this happen. As one member of staff told inspectors, 'We are now at a stage where individual teachers have a clear sense of their role in the bigger picture.' Teachers enjoy working at Christ the King and believe that the school is well led and managed. Staff also value the support they receive from senior leaders. They appreciate your strong focus on their workload, as well as their well-being.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors were confident and self-assured. They cooperate well. They were very positive about the school and feel supported, both academically and pastorally. Responses from Ofsted's online survey for pupils strongly support this view. Above-average attendance also supports this view. Persistent absence continues to be below the national averages.

The governing body makes sure that the school uses the breadth of skills and experience it contains. It uses these skills effectively to hold leaders to account. Governors are actively involved in the school and know its strengths and weaknesses well. They analyse and interpret data well. The governing body has a strong focus on ensuring that the school is as inclusive as possible.

The last inspection report asked teachers to use assessment information to plan learning that is more challenging for pupils. Teachers are now setting challenging work for pupils of all ability ranges. Leaders now check the level of challenge for different groups of pupils. This has led to more consistency across subjects and to pupils making faster progress.

Leaders were also asked to give teachers more opportunities to learn from the best practice in the school so that they could improve their own teaching. Since the last inspection, leaders have created a more strategic approach to improving the quality of teaching. They identify best practice and share this each term with a designated teaching and learning group and with other leaders. All staff have attended training on planning challenging and differentiated activities to meet pupils' needs. Subject and senior leaders check that the training has led to improved teaching. As a result, leaders and the governing body are more confident that lessons focus on the needs of key groups of pupils, specifically disadvantaged pupils. Teachers told us that they felt very well supported in improving their classroom practice. They have a strong desire for this approach to continue.

Another area for improvement from the last inspection was to make sure that teachers' feedback is always effective in helping students to improve their work. Leaders told us that they expect teachers to do this consistently. Teachers and pupils told inspectors that there has been a big improvement in this area over the past year. Examples of good-quality feedback in pupils' books help pupils to make improvements in humanities subjects, for example. This is not yet part of teachers' practice in all subjects, however, particularly in mathematics and science.

Disadvantaged pupils are now making faster progress. Examination results in 2017 showed that they had not made the progress they should have done. The senior leader responsible for the school's pupil premium strategy since September 2017 has led improvement in this area strongly. Changes to the way that the strategy is created, monitored and evaluated have had a positive impact on teaching and on the progress of disadvantaged pupils throughout the school. Parents and carers of disadvantaged pupils, who have historically been 'hard to reach', are now much more engaged. Nearly all of them attended an event designed to help parents support their

children at home. Nevertheless, leaders' evaluation of the impact of the use of this funding is not yet rigorous enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Senior leaders collaborate effectively to ensure that a culture of safeguarding permeates the school. Staff are clear about safeguarding systems, processes and their responsibilities. Detailed and accurate records are maintained securely. Recruitment checks and the maintenance of the school's record of these are strengths. All staff and governors have been trained in how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. The school liaises closely with the local authority about the particular safeguarding issues relevant to the local community. Staff carefully assess off-site activities for risk, including for the small number of pupils in key stage 4 educated in alternative provision.

A dedicated team of staff, coordinated by the designated safeguarding lead, supports vulnerable pupils. These staff work with determination and sensitivity with pupils, parents and external agencies. Robust procedures are in place to follow up absence. Child protection practice is good and timely action is taken when pupils are referred to social services. As a result, vulnerable pupils continue to attend school and achieve well.

The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their child is safe at school. Pupils confirmed this. Pupils said that they have many opportunities in assemblies, tutor time and lessons to learn how to stay safe. There is a strong focus on how to stay safe online, as well as on road safety and healthy eating. Pupils are confident about who to go to if they have a concern. They said that bullying is rare, and is dealt with consistently and effectively, should it occur.

The governing body routinely checks that all processes and policies are secure and that the school's records are thorough and complete. The minutes of meetings of the governing body indicate that governors are strongly involved with all aspects of safeguarding and that the governing body holds leaders to account.

Inspection findings

- Checks on the quality of teaching by middle leaders to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are identified and their needs are met are now happening. Seating plans identify disadvantaged pupils. Teachers use pupils' current and target grades to help plan their teaching. Teachers consistently target questions so that disadvantaged pupils become involved in discussion first. Evidence from a range of subjects shows that work is matched to disadvantaged pupils' abilities. Teachers provide the right levels of challenge for low-attaining, middle-attaining and high-attaining disadvantaged pupils.
- The science department is more stable after a period since the last inspection in which staffing changed. This turbulence contributed to underperformance in this

subject at the end of key stage 4 in the previous two years. The subject leader has focused on improving teaching and learning. Teaching is now better matched to pupils' ability, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Some able pupils in Year 13, however, are not being sufficiently challenged. Teaching assistants are now supporting teaching in science more effectively through collaborative planning, leading some activities and reviewing learning. As a result, assessment data indicates that pupils in all year groups are making faster progress and their attainment is rising.

- Teachers showed good subject knowledge in the science lessons observed, especially in the sixth form. Most teachers use questions and high levels of challenge to develop deeper thinking. Teachers use assessment information to plan challenging learning specifically for disadvantaged pupils. They do not, however, use the school's policy consistently to give feedback on pupils' work in science. This means that many pupils are not in a position to improve their work or to deepen their understanding of key scientific concepts.
- The work of the new subject leader for mathematics has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement in all year groups. This is particularly evident in Year 7 as a result of stronger transition processes. Catch-up funding is targeted more precisely at those in need of intervention. Analysis of results from a departmental survey strongly suggests that pupils in Years 7 and 8 feel more challenged in mathematics. The subject leader for mathematics has focused on improving teaching to bring faster progress, using strategies such as clear feedback to pupils, targeted questioning and developing vocabulary. Teachers plan in pairs to provide the right challenge for disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers' use of probing questions was a strength in lessons observed in Years 9 and 11. Teachers used a 'no hands up' policy consistently to target questions at disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils learned to use precise mathematical language to justify their answers. Teachers were not consistent, however, in supporting the full range of pupils in the class because activities sometimes did not match their ability. Pupils' mathematics books showed that the level of challenge and the pitch of the work are right for disadvantaged pupils of all abilities. The school's policy is not applied consistently, however, when teachers give feedback in mathematics.
- Published results in 2016 and 2017 show a decline in standards in the sixth form in academic studies. The intake to the sixth form has changed since the previous inspection, with a greater number of less-academic pupils joining the sixth form from a broader spectrum of backgrounds. The school is developing a more inclusive approach to meet the needs of all pupils in the sixth form. Leaders have shared best practice with subject leaders. Professional development opportunities have focused on challenge, feedback and differentiation in sixth-form teaching.
- Teachers plan lessons in the sixth form that provided challenge and opportunities for students to reflect. They show strong subject knowledge and consistently use probing questions to deepen learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in mathematics and science consistently provide feedback to pupils that helps them to improve their work and make faster progress
- they share best practice in engaging disadvantaged pupils in learning with other staff and check that it is being used consistently throughout the school
- they improve processes for checking the effectiveness of pupil premium spending and for measuring the success of leaders' work to support disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Pax Christi Catholic Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Nottingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you and other leaders to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. I held a meeting with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss pupils' attainment and progress, as well as meetings with a variety of senior leaders to discuss pupil premium funding and the quality of teaching. I held meetings with the subject leaders for mathematics and science and a wide range of other staff. In addition, I met with governors to hear how their work was helping to improve the school. We examined a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's development plan, information about current pupils' attainment and progress, analyses of attendance and behaviour, child protection records and the current strategic plan for using the pupil premium. My colleague observed 14 lessons, four of which were undertaken with a leader, as well as visiting a tutor group. He also spoke to pupils in key stages 3 and 4. We viewed work in pupils' books as part of our focus on the provision for disadvantaged pupils. I analysed the 62 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, the 44 free-text responses from parents, the 83 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and 50 responses to a questionnaire for pupils.