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Mr Xavier Bowers
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bowers

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School, Hyndburn

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

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

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- build on the improvements already made to ensure that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- ensure that teaching, learning and assessment in geography, history and science improves and raises outcomes for pupils
- further develop the knowledge and skills of new curriculum leaders so that they can raise standards in their subject areas.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders and middle leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with three governors of the governing body, including the chair. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Salford. I met with a group of pupils formally, and spoke with others as I visited lessons. I carried out observations of learning in a range of subjects and looked at pupils' work. Some of these activities were undertaken jointly with a senior leader. I took account of documents provided by senior leaders and evaluated the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation document. I reviewed the school's safeguarding policies and practices and checked the single central record. I considered the 68 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes in staff and leadership. Five members of staff, including the deputy headteacher, left the school in July 2018. Seven members of staff, including three curriculum leaders, joined the school in September 2018. Some subject areas have been strengthened by the appointment of assistant curriculum leaders from within the school. An assistant headteacher is leading the science department on a temporary basis. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and will start in September 2019.

Main findings

You, your senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve outcomes for pupils. You have developed an improvement plan underpinned by clear timescales and success criteria to review progress. You have not shied away from making difficult leadership decisions when required. For example, you have altered the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team. This has helped to ensure that their roles are closely aligned to the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. You have successfully stabilised your staff team, recruiting suitably qualified specialist staff. Staff who spoke with me were positive about the opportunities you have provided to develop their skills. This is helping to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. However, you and your governors acknowledge that there is still a lot more to do for the school to be judged good at its next inspection.

Curriculum leaders are developing schemes of work that build on pupils' prior learning and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding during their five years at the school. Curriculum leaders feel that they are now held to account for the progress of the pupils they teach. The leaders of English and mathematics work closely together to share good practice. Some curriculum leaders are new and

enthusiastic about their roles. You have plans in place to further develop their skills in monitoring and improving their subject areas.

You have improved the accuracy of the school's systems for recording information about pupils' attainment and progress. This is helping teachers to plan tasks that are more tailored to pupils' needs. You and your leaders now check the progress of individuals and groups of pupils more carefully.

The senior assistant headteacher is providing good support and challenge to staff, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. More formal support for staff is provided where needed. During my short visits to lessons, I found that teachers have higher expectations of pupils. However, there is more work to be done to ensure that all pupils are challenged appropriately in lessons. Pupils' literacy skills and numeracy skills are improving. Pupils increasingly read for pleasure through timetabled periods in the school day. Although the strategies you have introduced to improve teaching and learning are not yet completely embedded, the early signs are that they are having an impact on gaining consistency in the quality of teaching across the school.

Published results in 2018 for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), show an improving picture. Pupils made broadly average progress, including in English and mathematics. However, Year 11 pupils' progress in geography, history and science dipped and was below average in 2018. You have introduced a range of initiatives to improve teaching and learning and pupils' progress in these subjects as a priority. Pupils have more opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding through real-life experiences such as trips and visits across the curriculum. My short visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and review of current assessment information indicate that attainment and progress is improving in a range of subjects.

Inspection evidence suggests that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are making better progress than in the past. This is because of closer tracking of pupils' progress and a range of interventions, including increased support outside of lessons. Teaching is also more focused on meeting the needs of pupils. However, you recognise that further work is required to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEND achieve well.

During my visit, I also looked at safeguarding. Recruitment checks on staff's suitability to work with children are up-to-date. Staff receive regular training and updates on safeguarding procedures. They know what to do should a concern about a pupil's welfare arise. Pupils report that bullying incidents are rare and that when they occur, staff deal with them effectively. Your three designated safeguarding leads work effectively with external agencies, where appropriate, to protect vulnerable pupils. Records are thorough, and referrals are made in a timely manner.

All pupils I spoke to during the visit said that they enjoy school and feel safe. Pupils spoke positively about the impact of the new behaviour system. They say that low-level disruption in lessons has reduced and that teaching has improved. I found there to be a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Pupils have positive relationships with each other and their teachers. They work happily with each other regardless of ethnicity, background or starting points.

Governors remain fully committed to seeing the school improve. The minutes of governors' meetings show that they ask leaders challenging questions about the impact of their work. Governors receive honest and accurate information from you. This helps them to provide a strong level of challenge and support to you and your leaders.

External support

The local authority has provided regular support and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. An external review of the senior leadership team was carried out by an experienced educational consultant. A range of teaching schools are providing strong ongoing support for a variety of areas. St Patrick's Teaching School has provided effective support to improve teaching in mathematics. The East Lancashire Teaching School Alliance and Red Rose Teaching School Alliance have provided support to improve teaching in computing, geography and history.

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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar

Her Majesty's Inspector