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Mr Danny Coyle
Headteacher
Newman Catholic College
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Dear Mr Coyle

Short inspection of Newman Catholic College

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 2016 with Yvonne Chisholm, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

You, with the support of your senior leaders and governors, have made notable improvements to the quality of education provided to the young people in your care. Following the departure of the previous headteacher, the school went through a period of substantial upheaval. You inherited a serious budget deficit, falling rolls and a number of areas needing significant improvement. Your diligence, careful planning and financial austerity ensured that you tackled these issues swiftly and creatively. As a result, the school is now financially stable again, pupil numbers are rising and their outcomes are improving. You have created a multifaith community that promotes an ethos of tolerance and care among all children and staff within the parameters of a Catholic education. The 'Newman Values' permeate throughout the school and you have created a harmonious and diverse learning community that truly celebrates differences.

You and your leaders have an accurate and impressive understanding of the cultural contexts of the pupils you serve and the actions required to meet their diverse needs. You know your school well and are clear what still needs to be done to ensure that all pupils make substantial progress from their different starting points.

Pupils' contexts are often very complex and they require multiple agency support in order to meet their needs and enable them to be active British citizens. Many pupils

arrive on a weekly basis, with little or no spoken English, and need significant and intensive support in order to access the curriculum and society as a whole. Your excellent team of specialist staff ensure that you efficiently assess pupils on arrival and that subsequent interventions are swift and relevant. Consequently, these pupils very quickly learn to speak English and access the school curriculum. Many make substantial progress in a short space of time.

Superb staff and pupil relationships across the school ensure that the atmosphere is calm and purposeful. Pupils socialise together across all year groups and are very proud of their school. They are routinely polite and courteous and show respect and understanding towards their differing cultures and faiths. Staff encourage pupils to celebrate their differences while learning how to be model citizens and thrive in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. The school actively promotes and encourages healthy eating and lifestyles. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is encouraged through activities such as the 'sport and thought therapy' programme and the wide variety of extra-curricular activities on offer. Girls in the sixth form integrate fully into the life of the whole school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are robust and in line with current government guidance. Referrals to outside agencies are timely and actions followed up systematically. Staff are well aware of the potential risks faced by pupils in the wider community, in particular, affiliation with gangs, antisocial behaviour, grooming and radicalisation. They are quick to note any signs of pupils' involvement, are well trained and the school's open culture encourages pupils to share concerns they may have. Staff know which pupils are more susceptible to involvement and explore topical issues during assemblies, form time, personal, social, health and economic education and religious education lessons. The safer schools officers have built positive relationships with the pupils and their families. Consequently, they help to create a safe and protective environment, both in school and as pupils make their way home.

The school is relatively small and staff know the pupils very well. They know which pupils are at risk of neglect, those managing alone and those coming to terms with traumatic backgrounds. Staff carefully track the attendance of pupils and challenge parents should they take them out of school during term time. Bullying is rare, but when it does occur, pupils say that it is dealt with quickly and efficiently. Pupils learn how to use social media appropriately and how to avoid cyber bullying.

Inspection findings

- Pupils arrive at and leave the school at different times throughout the school year. The majority arrive with little or no English speaking skills, some with no formal education prior to starting at Newman Catholic College and limited information regarding their prior ability. Consequently, leaders have rightly focused on ensuring that initial assessments are complemented by regular

progress checks throughout the year. Middle and senior leaders use this information to check that pupils' progress does not falter or stop. They meet regularly to check on the progress of individual pupils and implement extra support where necessary.

- Members of the governing body are experienced, supportive of the leadership team and suitably challenging. Their moral integrity and belief in the Catholic values underpins their belief in a fully inclusive school community. They do not shy away from their corporate responsibilities. Governors dealt swiftly with sensitive staffing issues and assiduous monitoring by the finance governor has ensured that the school's financial deficit has now been resolved. They appointed you to the post of headteacher and believe that you have brought renewed rigour to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the school.
- Middle leaders are equally experienced and share the school's vision and values. They have embraced recent changes and are keen to support their stable teams to deliver on the school's priorities. Middle leaders carefully check the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes in their subject areas.
- School leaders have rightly prioritised improving pupils' literacy skills, particularly reading. A number of high-profile events are organised to encourage a love of reading and hone essential skills. The yearly 'School Read' involves all staff, governors and pupils in key stage 3. Everyone reads the same book at the same time and collective activities are organised across the curriculum to explore the themes, ideas and stories. Pupils spoke of their enthusiasm for this project, particularly as they get to keep the books. There is a range of intensive reading programmes to help those who struggle. The library is well resourced and very popular. Pupils who were listened to reading during the inspection did so confidently and fluently, even when encountering complex and unfamiliar words.
- Teachers use assessment information to plan effective activities that meet the very diverse learning needs of pupils. Those pupils who are new to speaking English integrate quickly into mainstream classes and all pupils are encouraged to talk in English for the majority of their time. Pupils grow in confidence and articulate their ideas before writing them down.
- Published outcomes data only gives an indication of the progress made by a very small cohort of pupils who arrived in Year 7 and stayed until Year 11. It does not provide the whole picture of the progress made by pupils across the school and in different subjects. Those who arrive later than Year 7 and are learning to speak English make very good progress from their different starting points. Equally, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities including those with an education, health and care plan make very good progress.
- Leaders have identified that some groups of pupils are more at risk of underachievement than other groups at the school. These include Black Caribbean, some disadvantaged pupils and some of the most able. Currently, leaders are prioritising improving the progress of these groups of pupils.
- School leaders have brokered effective links with other schools, most notably with Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School. Together, the two schools share best practice, monitor the quality of each other's provision and undertake regular checks on teachers' assessment of pupils. This mutually beneficial partnership also allows for joint endeavours, for instance, opportunities for the most able pupils from each school to collaborate on projects such as drama productions.

- The sixth form is going through a period of substantial change. In 2014, leaders slimlined the 16 to 19 study programme to offer only vocational and level 2 courses, due to students' success on these courses over time. However, in September 2016, they took the decision to offer a small number of A-level courses to widen student choice. Leaders are carefully checking that the quality of teaching on these courses is the same quality as that seen in vocational subjects. The sixth form is completely inclusive and growing in number due to the admittance of girls. Students on vocational courses and those in the 'project groups' make excellent progress over time. However, leaders fully accept that they need to check robustly the quality of teaching on the newly introduced academic courses to ensure that students make at least good progress. The sixth form is small and meets the needs of the students. Much emphasis is placed on preparing students for work on leaving school, particularly those who have recently arrived in the country.
- Provision for the large number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority is good. The coordinator works closely with the local authority to ensure that their academic, social and emotional needs are met. The coordinator ensures that pupils' personal education plans (PEPs) are efficiently kept. Extra government funding is spent appropriately to ensure that these pupils can access the curriculum and make good progress in their learning, which they do.
- The local authority has effectively supported the school through its turbulent time. They are confident that senior leaders have the capacity to continue to make improvements independently. Consequently, they have ceased the 'rapid improvement group' formed to support the headteacher when he was appointed. They are complimentary about the effective work of leaders to tackle the highly complex needs of some pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- students on academic courses in the sixth form, including A level and GCSE English and mathematics, make at least good progress from their starting points, across all subjects
- groups identified by the school, including the most able, Black Caribbean and disadvantaged pupils, make more substantial progress from their starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- the progress that disadvantaged pupils make, particularly the most able
- the quality of teaching and learning, especially in English, so that those new to English speaking and writing can access the curriculum
- the quality of 16 to 19 study programmes in the sixth form
- the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

Inspectors carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection:

- they met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team to look at the school's self-evaluation
- they spoke to the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the head of the sixth form, the special educational needs coordinator and the leader of the provision for English as an additional language
- they conducted a series of short visits to classrooms to look at learning across all key stages, accompanied by senior leaders
- they spoke to pupils about their work, listened to them read and held informal conversations with individuals and groups during break and lunchtimes
- they considered the 65 staff questionnaires and the 168 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire
- they scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, pupil progress information, admissions and attendance logs and safeguarding records
- they checked the school's website and complaints history.