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Mr Christopher Billings  
Headteacher  
Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School  
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Dear Mr Billings

### **Short inspection of Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2019 with Gwendoline Onyon, 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2010.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that the large majority of pupils who have completed Year 11 have made very good progress in a wide range of subjects, including in English and mathematics.

Pupils currently at the school are making strong progress across year groups and in different subjects. This is because you have some effective strategies for making sure that the quality of teaching is under continual review. As a result, when teaching does not match your high expectations, you and the leadership team take prompt action to provide targeted support and training so that teachers are able to improve their skills, when necessary. However, you recognise that more work is needed to ensure that teachers plan work which is well matched to the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders at all levels have good capacity to improve the school further. For example, although outcomes in some areas declined in 2018, leaders of these areas acted promptly to ensure that robust and meticulous analysis took place. As a result, weaknesses are being effectively addressed this year.

You have developed an exciting curriculum for pupils which effectively supports them to develop academically and personally. For example, in key stage 3, subject leaders have created a three-year curriculum which is underpinned by the principles of 'challenge, collaboration and memory'. This is preparing pupils well for their key stage 4 option subjects. In key stage 4, a much higher proportion of pupils study the group of subjects

called the English baccalaureate (English, mathematics, sciences, languages and humanities) than is found nationally. This prepares pupils very well for their next steps in education or employment with training. Enrichment activities are well supported by pupils and you offer a diverse range of opportunities for pupils to enjoy.

The 'character passport' award is a particularly effective aspect of the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 and 8. This is underpinned by Catholic values and encourages all pupils to engage in activities within and beyond school. The programme aims to support pupils in developing a wide range of personal characteristics which are known as the 'Ullathorne way'. This aspect of the curriculum is having a good impact on pupils' personal development.

The large majority of pupils are polite and well mannered. Behaviour in lessons and at social times is good and this is indicative of the impact of the 'Ullathorne way'. Pupils behave respectfully towards each other, regardless of different pupils' backgrounds. The school is a harmonious, multicultural learning community. This was summed up by one pupil who said, 'There is a sense of compassion around the school and everyone is valued as part of the school family.' Attendance is good, and this reflects pupils' enjoyment of school.

Leaders have responded well to the recommendations for improvement from the last short inspection in January 2016. For example, the school now has in place all statutory policies and has made sure that interventions for pupils who are falling behind are robustly evaluated for their impact. One area for improvement related to narrowing the differences in attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to others. The very strong outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 in 2016 and 2017 are tangible evidence of the school's success in this area. However, although this is improving, more work is needed in some areas so that disadvantaged pupils consistently catch up with their peers across subjects and year groups.

Sixth-form students have not made good progress for three years. In 2018, too many students, including those who were disadvantaged, made poor progress across a range of subjects. In the past, leaders have had an overoptimistic view of the sixth form's effectiveness, because they have based their evaluation on students' attainment and not given sufficient attention to improving rates of progress. As a result of decisive actions taken by leaders, the sixth form is now improving, although leaders should more robustly monitor the progress of different groups of students who have similar prior attainment.

Sixth-form students enjoy their studies and articulate clearly how some subjects have improved because of the successful actions to address weak teaching. Those who met an inspector spoke positively about the wider provision to support their personal development. The students described numerous opportunities to engage in a wide range of enrichment activities and they appreciate the various positions of responsibility that they can choose to take up.

The governing body is a committed and skilled group. Governors have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which is gained, in part, from regular school visits. As a result, governors hold you and other leaders robustly to

account for the impact of your work. However, governors have not held school leaders fully to account for the progress of sixth-form students.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff are appropriately vetted, as required, and training takes place at regular points across the year, including training on the government's 'Prevent' strategy. The staff who met with an inspector demonstrated a strong understanding of safeguarding, including a clear knowledge of school procedures and a good level of awareness with respect to identifying a child who may be at risk.

Pupils and students feel safe at school. Those who met inspectors demonstrated a clear understanding of how to assess risk in a range of situations. The curriculum and assembly programme are well planned so that pupils learn about a wide range of safety matters. For example, pupils learn about road safety, how to keep safe when working online and the risks associated with knife crime. In an age-appropriate way, pupils and students are also taught about the risks associated with extremism, and there are pupil ambassadors who promote safety across the school in this respect.

### **Inspection findings**

- Outcomes in science declined significantly in 2018 and too many pupils made slow progress, particularly the most able pupils and those who were disadvantaged. This was in stark contrast to the very good progress made by most pupils in 2016 and 2017. As a result of these outcomes, you have implemented an effective process of close monitoring and six-weekly checks to ensure that outcomes improve, particularly for the groups of pupils who underachieved in 2018. Science leaders have accurately analysed why outcomes dipped in 2018. They implement effective strategies to address the weaknesses that were evident, including more through coverage of particular topics. As a result of this work, pupils are making good progress this year in science. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are also achieving well, with many working at very high levels in the single-science courses which include physics, chemistry and biology. However, although improving, disadvantaged pupils are not catching up with their peers as quickly as they need to in the combined science course in key stage 4. This is because strategies that senior leaders have in place to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils are not consistently applied by all teachers in science.
- Most Year 11 pupils made average progress in languages in 2018. However, many of the most able pupils made slower progress than others. Overall, the progress that pupils have made in languages has declined year-on-year since 2016. You have taken swift action to address the weaknesses in 2018. You have made sure that an effective leader is now in post, who has robustly and accurately evaluated the strengths and weaknesses in the department. As with science, the six-weekly monitoring strategy is having a positive impact on supporting the languages department to improve quickly. The leader has correctly identified why the most able pupils, in particular, underachieved in 2018 and has effective strategies in place which are improving matters. As a result, assessment information shows that a higher proportion of the

most able pupils than last year are on track to achieve the highest grades in Year 11 this year. However, leaders agree that the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others is not narrowing quickly enough.

- Outcomes for pupils with SEND in 2018 in Year 11 were weak on all key measures. However, pupils are beginning to make stronger progress this year. This is because staff have benefited from regular training, and monitoring procedures are more robust than they have been in the past. Effective interventions are in place for those pupils who require additional support. Notwithstanding this, this group of pupils is not making the same good progress as others across the curriculum because work is not consistently well matched to the learning needs of some of these pupils.
- As with other areas of relative weakness, leaders have taken some effective action to improve teaching and learning in subjects where standards have not been high enough. For example, the quality of teaching and learning in drama, business studies and textiles is improving strongly. Some pupils have not achieved well in these subjects in the past, but the school's assessment information shows improvement this year, including for disadvantaged pupils and, increasingly, for pupils with SEND.
- The sixth form is improving this year. This is because leaders have an appropriately focused improvement strategy in place and provide effective training for sixth-form teachers. The impact of this work is that Year 13 students are making stronger progress than last year, and this is evident when comparing outcomes from the recent 'mock' examinations with those last year. Leaders carefully track the progress and attainment of individual students and they provide personalised support when necessary. However, leaders do not monitor the progress of different groups of students, including those with similar prior attainment, so that they can make precise improvements to teaching to help any group improve.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently plan work that is accurately matched to pupils' skills and abilities to enable pupils with SEND to make strong progress across the curriculum
- the improvements in the sixth form are accelerated by monitoring the progress and attainment of groups of students who have similar prior attainment
- teachers consistently apply the school's policies that are in place to raise attainment so that disadvantaged pupils catch up with their peers in languages and combined science.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Sutton  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Meetings took place with you and your leadership team, the head of science, the head of languages, the leader of provision for pupils with SEND, the leader who is responsible for provision for disadvantaged pupils and a group of teaching and support staff. Inspectors also met groups of pupils and students from all key stages. The lead inspector held a meeting with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. Inspectors visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. They scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, assessment records and information related to recruitment checks. Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire from 35 staff. We considered 43 responses from parents to the Ofsted Parent View online survey and also analysed 65 responses to a questionnaire that pupils completed.