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31 October 2016

Mr Nigel Fisher  
Headteacher  
St Columba's Catholic Boys' School  
Halcot Avenue  
Bexleyheath  
Kent  
DA6 7QB

Dear Mr Fisher

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Columba's Catholic Boys' School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 September 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss behaviour in your school.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about a recent incident in the wider community, in which some pupils attending the school were allegedly involved.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions with pupils
- documentary evidence
- discussions with school leaders and staff.

Having evaluated the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time: Leaders and managers have taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

## **Context**

St Columba's Catholic Boys' School is a smaller than average-size 11-16 secondary school. Over half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, while the number who speak English as an additional language is just above average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The number of pupils with a statement of educational need or with an education, health and care plan is just above average. Pupil mobility is below average. There are currently no staff vacancies.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils at St. Columba's show respect, tolerance and courtesy towards each other, staff and visitors in this harmonious school. They are proud to be known as 'St. Columba's boys' and wear their uniforms with pride. Many commented that the school is like an extended family with one boy remarking, 'we are like a family of brothers'. As such, older pupils support those younger than themselves, particularly the new Year 7 as they settle into school life. The leadership programme encourages pupils to take on responsibilities across the school and they do so enthusiastically. Pupils took time to talk to the inspectors, wished them 'a good day' and held doors open for them. Throughout the short lunch break, pupils' conduct was good; queuing patiently for food, socialising maturely with friends or playing table tennis.

Pupils have high aspirations and work hard in lessons. They listen carefully, attempt all tasks set, and their work is organised and well presented. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. The boys feel well cared for and those spoken to were unanimous that, should they have any concerns, their teachers would deal with them quickly and efficiently. Consequently, pupils report that bullying is rare and records kept by the school endorse this. School leaders set high expectations around pupils' behaviour which are consistently applied by staff. For example pupils are clear about the sanctions they receive should they be late for school or not in the correct uniform. Equally, the well-used rewards programme positively encourages pupils to behave exceptionally well. For instance, pupils aspire to earn yellow star badges for excellent attitudes to learning and Year 11 boys work hard to achieve their 'gold ties'. A range of extra-curricular activities engages and motivates the boys to participate in a variety of musical, sporting and cultural events. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, consequently, attendance is higher than the national average.

School leaders have created a nurturing and caring school community. Staff know

the boys well and every attempt is made to support their individual needs. Staff are proud of the pupils' spiritual and emotional development in this safe environment. Procedures around staff recruitment are in line with current statutory guidance and teachers receive regular safeguarding training. Any referrals to external agencies are done quickly and actions followed-up appropriately. Pupils who arrive midway through the year are given effective and prompt support to integrate into school life. Pupils are encouraged to undertake charity and volunteering work in the local area in order to develop their understanding of the local community and wider world.

School leaders have begun to work more closely with external agencies, particularly the police, through their involvement in the 'partnership' meetings. Increasingly, pupils are asked to consider potential dangers they might face in modern Britain, for example affiliation with gangs or the threat of extremist behaviour. School leaders know that more needs to be done in this area to give pupils further knowledge and understanding of how they can protect themselves in a range of situations outside school. St Columba's pupils come from a range of different communities. Staff have limited understanding of the potential risks faced by these pupils when they are not in the protective confines of the school.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- School leaders must develop a more strategic approach to ensuring that pupils are further prepared for life in modern Britain by:
  - fostering more links with external agencies and the wider community through the partnership meetings
  - further utilizing the safer schools team to develop pupils' understanding of how they can keep themselves safe in a range of situations outside of school
  - continuing to work closely with other schools in the borough and the catholic diocese to share best practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews

**Her Majesty's Inspector**