



# ST MARGARET WARD CATHOLIC ACADEMY



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Principal: Mr. D. McKenna B.Soc.Sc. MA. PGCE. NPQH.

01B/OfstedReport2021/DM/LB

9<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Please see attached a copy of the Ofsted report from our recent inspection which took place on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September. Over the past three and a half years we have made significant changes to most aspects of the school and, as a consequence, the school grounds are safer, children are very well looked after, the finances are stable, the curriculum is far more challenging and our expectations of students are higher. We have introduced our 'Teaching minds, touching hearts and transforming lives' approach to the holistic education of our children to ensure that, not only are they supported to achieve a high quality, challenging academic curriculum, but careful thought is also given to the wider curriculum around the child to ensure they are well prepared for life outside and beyond school. In addition, we continue to develop the extra-curricular offer for students after school and during the school holidays.

I have written to you on a number of occasions during this time and acknowledged that we are aware that there is more to do, and this will always be the case, however, an Ofsted inspection is a good way to know how far we have come.

Ofsted do not judge schools on how hard they work or how much they have improved, neither do they judge schools on what they are planning to do but only on what they see as established practice during the inspection. They simply measure them against a rigorous, objective criterion which is applied to all schools. This has been recently updated and is even more challenging than before.

Therefore, we are very pleased with this report and the number of positive comments contained within. I would like to draw your attention to a few key points;

With regard to our 'Teaching minds', academic curriculum;

*'Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Over recent years, they have taken steps to ensure that pupils study a broad range of subjects in depth from Year 7 to Year 9. As a result of these actions, more and more pupils are better prepared to study the range of subjects that are part of the English Baccalaureate.'*

*'Teachers give pupils regular opportunities to answer questions about topics that they have learned before. Pupils told us that this is helping them to remember content they have learned in the past. Teachers explain subject content clearly and are knowledgeable about their subjects. In the sixth form, they correct students' misconceptions well.'*

In their observations around the culture and behaviour of the school;

*'Leaders have very clear expectations for how all members of the community behave towards each other. Staff share these expectations, known as the 'Margaret Ward Way', clearly and consistently with pupils. Pupils appreciate this clarity. They told inspectors, 'we know where we stand'. Pupils try hard and consistently live up to these expectations.'*

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*'The school environment is calm and orderly. Pupils behave sensibly in lessons and at other times of the school day. They follow teachers' instructions and are respectful of each other.'*

With regards to our 'Touching Hearts' Curriculum and extra-curricular offer;

*'The school's 'Touching Hearts' curriculum is a strength of the school. It develops pupils socially and personally. As part of this curriculum, pupils learn about different faiths and beliefs. There is a strong emphasis on mutual respect and tolerance. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. In addition, the 'Touching Hearts' curriculum builds year on year so that pupils get the information they need at the right time.'*

*'Leaders acted swiftly to restart lunchtime and after-school clubs following the disruption due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. There is an impressive range on offer. Most pupils make good use of them. These include an orchestra, choir, football, jazz band and drama club and many, many more.'*

Their recognition of how we keep children safe;

*'Staff are knowledgeable about the signs of abuse. They have a strong understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures. Leaders ensure that staff pass on any concerns about a pupil quickly. When pupils need help, leaders take swift action. Leaders are acutely aware of the local risks to pupils. They ensure that pupils get the support and information they need to help them keep safe.'*

*'Bullying rarely happens. If it does, pupils know who to speak to and they are confident it will be sorted out quickly.'*

They also made positive observations about how we support students with SEND;

*'Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers. These pupils have an individual 'pupil passport'. This passport sets out how adults can best support them. Teachers use this information well in lessons. As a result of these approaches, pupils with SEND achieve well.'*

We are very aware, that in order to make the improvements we want to see in the school, there needs to be a planned strategic approach towards this transformation and Ofsted have seen us part way along this path. We know we still have work to do and we are reassured that the area Ofsted identified for improvement is one we have also started to work on as a priority.

*'Teachers do not check pupils' understanding within lessons well enough. This means that teachers do not always know when pupils are stuck or have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers know how to systematically check learning in their subjects so that they can identify gaps in learning and give pupils the help they need.'*

We have already started work with teachers to identify most explicitly which knowledge should be learnt by students each lesson and have introduced an updated assessment system and coaching system for teachers to ensure this is addressed. As you may remember from my letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> September, this is included in our School Improvement Plan for the coming year and the Inspection has offered guidance on how this can be done most effectively.

To conclude, despite the interruptions and distractions of the pandemic, we have managed to make significant changes to the school over the past three and a half years which have been acknowledged and recognised in this inspection. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and thank those of you who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire during the inspection. St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy is continually improving towards our goal of becoming one of the best schools in the country and this Ofsted inspection has been very affirming that we are on the right path.

Yours faithfully



Mr D McKenna

Principal

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