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7 October 2013

Father J Briody  
Headteacher  
Savio Salesian College  
Netherton Way  
Bootle  
Merseyside  
L30 2NA

Dear Father Briody

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Savio Salesian College**

Following my visit to your school on 4 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a school standards and effectiveness adviser who is coordinating the support provided by the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. The school's single central record, which contains checks on staff appointments, was reviewed.

### **Context**

Five members of staff have left the school since the last inspection and five have been appointed, including a new deputy headteacher who is leading on students' achievement. Appropriate checks have been carried out to ensure that staff are suitably qualified to work at the school. Two new governors have been added to the governing body and both have educational leadership experience.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The school has incorporated the areas for improvement from the inspection into its three-year strategic plan. This is a very comprehensive document. It contains measurable targets for the end of each year, supplemented by milestone targets for what the school expects to

achieve by the end of each term. This is helpful to senior staff and governors in checking what difference the plan and related actions are making. It is a regular agenda item at meetings of senior leaders and is being monitored effectively. To ensure the plan is manageable, members of the senior leadership team each have responsibility for an aspect within it. Given the size of the plan, the headteacher recognises that a very short summary of it would be useful to help all staff keep the priorities clearly in mind. The headteacher also appreciates that the targets for improving attendance and the quality of teaching, although set using the best available information, may need to be increased as the school starts to improve so that suitable challenge is maintained. For example, emerging data for attendance this term suggest that the attendance target set for years two and three of the plan could be achieved much earlier.

The school has formed a partnership with a school in another local authority. The partner school has a track record of improvement and has been judged outstanding. It has been selected because it has successful experience in improving the quality of teaching. The actions planned to improve teaching are suitably focused on training for teachers. Training has already been delivered around grouping of pupils and giving confidence to teachers to take more risks in their teaching. Further training is planned through to May 2014.

Additionally, there is a move to share more good practice in school. There are examples of focused support for teachers, including one-to-one coaching and observing other teachers' lessons. The school is in the process of forming a teaching and learning group comprising an assistant headteacher and two teachers whose teaching has been judged outstanding. They will coordinate the coaching of other teachers.

The school's policy for marking students' work has been reviewed following a series of work scrutinies. The policy now expects teachers to engage in a dialogue with students through marking in order to challenge their thinking more. As it has only recently been implemented, a further book scrutiny is soon to take place to establish what difference the new policy is making.

There have been steps forward in promoting the teaching of literacy and numeracy across all subjects. For example, literacy has been moved up the agenda through: a whole-school literacy day; the forming of a school newspaper; paired reading after school with past pupils; reading buddies for Year 7 and Year 8 students; and the new marking policy having teachers focus on spelling and grammar in all subjects. An audit has mapped out where numeracy can be used in other subjects and more time has been given to numeracy in form time. The roles of the numeracy and literacy coordinators have been reshaped so they are now line managed by members of the senior leadership team.

There are some early indications that progress in English is beginning to accelerate in Year 7 and Year 8. For example, 71% of the current Year 8 students made the nationally expected two sub-levels of progress in English when they were in Year 7. This compares favourably to the 59% who made this rate of progress in Year 7 the year before.

The school's actions to improve attendance are beginning to reap rewards. The imperative for students to attend regularly has been made clear and the school is focusing particularly on those students whose attendance is below 90%. The role of the school's attendance support officer has been adjusted so that she now makes home visits on the first day of any absence and the school can cite examples where a student has returned to school on the same day. The rewards students achieve for improved and maximum attendance have been

made more meaningful to them. The rate of attendance this term to date is 1.2% better than it was for the same period last year and 2.6% better than the year before that. The number of absences due to families taking holiday in term time is dropping. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is also showing signs of reducing.

Senior leaders have set about improving their skills in monitoring teaching and learning, and ensuring that heads of departments are also focused on improving teaching and students' achievement. Senior leaders commissioned training for themselves from experienced school inspectors in judging the quality of lessons. In turn, they have trained middle leaders in the same way. This training has also put senior and middle leaders on a firmer footing in judging the impact of the training teachers are receiving from the partner school.

The governing body has formed a group to monitor specifically the progress of the school through its time in serious weaknesses. It comprises the Chair of the Governing Body and two governors with education leadership experience. They have set about interviewing middle and senior leaders and focusing on the difference being made to the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Sensibly, they intend inviting the local authority and the archdiocese to have representatives on the group. The Chair of the Governing Body has a good appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of the school's plans to tackle the relevant areas. He is resolute in his determination to improve the school and is not shying away from ensuring the governing body holds senior staff to account.

The local authority has a good appreciation of the strengths and needs of the school. The adviser facilitating the support of the local authority is well experienced and has begun to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in line with the actions identified in the local authority's statement of action. As the school has formed a partnership with another school outside Sefton, the local authority is less involved in delivering training directly. Its role, predominantly, is to check how well the school is doing. Its arrangements for this and for checking its own work are robust. Nevertheless, now that the work of the partner school is set out clearly in the school's plans, there is scope for the school and the local authority to ensure that monitoring by the local authority embraces the impact of the partner school's work as well.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Young People and Families for Sefton, the Archdiocese and Trustees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven

**Additional Inspector**