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12 November 2013

Mr Paul Hughes  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic College  
Ocotal Way  
Swindon  
SN3 3LR

Dear Mr Hughes

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic College**

Following my visit to your academy on 12 November 2013, 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 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with senior leaders, associate leaders of core subjects, members of the governing body and a group of students. There were also a number of brief visits to lessons. The academy's improvement plan was evaluated and the single central record scrutinised.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, a new principal has taken up post. Senior leaders' roles and responsibilities have been reassigned to link with the academy's improvement priorities.

An interim executive board has been convened in addition to the governing body. Its role is to make strategic decisions until the removal of special measures. A skills audit of the governing body has been conducted.

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

You have made a good start to bring about the improvements needed in order to begin the journey of removing special measures. Senior leaders are confident in their new roles and understand the improvements they are tasked with bringing about. The 2013 GCSE examination results show significant improvements, particularly in English and mathematics.

Importantly, there is a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching. Staff have received training on aspects of teaching, including the formative use of marking. Similarly, there are clear expectations on strengthening lesson planning so as to meet the needs of all students. Senior leaders are monitoring teaching through regular learning walks, short visits to lessons and formal observations. Teachers identified as not following expectations or whose teaching is not yet good are placed onto a support programme delivered through coaches within the academy. These programmes are in place for a brief period of time and closely monitored. The academy is using other procedures, such as capability, as and where necessary to bring about rapid improvements.

Procedures for the management of staff performance have been strengthened to ensure that at all levels, teachers are routinely held to account for the outcomes of the students they are responsible for. Targets are closely linked to achievement and to ensuring students make at least good progress. Leaders with responsibility for a subject performance-manage staff in their departments and this enables them to be fully accountable for the performance of their subject.

Members of the governing body fully accept their responsibility for the declining standards, prior to the inspection. As a result, they are resolute in ensuring current improvements continue and accelerate further. They provide strong support to the principal. The Chair of the Governing Body, through his inspection and education background, is providing appropriate challenge and guidance on key areas for improvement. The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose. However, there is a need to ensure that some milestones have more measurable outcomes to ensure the academy is on track to meet its targets. The named person responsible for evaluating actions should be independent from the person implementing the action, to ensure an objective evaluation is reached.

Information on students' progress is now being used more effectively by teachers to plan lessons that account for the differing abilities of learners. You have increased the number of times achievement data is collected from three to six times per year. This information is being used to highlight any underachievement, which leads to appropriate intervention strategies being deployed. Senior leaders have implemented appropriate systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of these. A baseline assessment of students' numeracy, literacy and reading ability is conducted. The

resulting information is being used to provide extra opportunities through the curriculum to develop these key skills. For example, support staff, teachers and post-16 students are reading regularly each week with students in Key Stage 3 and there is evidence that this is impacting positively on their engagement with books.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority for Swindon, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Clifton, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**