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9 March 2015

Mrs Sarah Pollard  
Executive Headteacher  
Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy  
Wellington Street  
Grimsby  
Lincolnshire  
DN32 7JX

Dear Mrs Pollard

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy**

Following my visit to your academy with Lesley Butcher HMI on 6 March 2015 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in April 2014. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Strategic Director for People for North East Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better, so that pupils make at least good progress in mathematics and in writing, particularly in Years 3 and 4, and reach the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 6 by:
  - raising expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve and by planning activities that consistently challenge them, particularly in mathematics
  - ensuring a consistent whole-academy approach to developing pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills and providing pupils with more opportunities to write at length
  - improving the quality of marking so pupils know what they have to do to make their work better and then act quickly upon that advice
  - making sure that activities are interesting enough to capture and hold pupils' attention in their work, so that their attitudes to learning and behaviour are always good, particularly the boys in Year 4
  - planning activities that enable pupils who are supported by the pupil premium to make good progress, especially in writing and mathematics.
  
- Further improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - eradicating the very small remnant of inadequate teaching in lower Key Stage 2, particularly in writing
  - developing the role of middle leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact of achievement in their subjects by using data more effectively, so that they have a good understanding of how well pupils achieve and how well they are taught, in their areas of responsibility
  - working with parents to ensure recent improvements in pupils' attendance and punctuality continue, so that attendance is good, pupils are rarely late for academy and learning time is not missed
  - making sure the governing body develops robust procedures for checking the effectiveness of the academy's use of the pupil premium funding.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to access how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 6 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of the academy, senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body, a group of staff and a group of Key Stage 2 pupils. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the academy sponsor. Documents provided by the academy were evaluated. Teaching and learning were observed in the early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. All of the observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. The lesson observations focused on the quality of teaching and learning, especially related to the areas for improvement, and the impact of new academy policies in the classroom.

### **Context**

During the spring term 2015, two new governors and a teaching assistant have joined the academy. A new assistant headteacher will start in June 2015.

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

Senior leaders are providing strong leadership for the academy. Governors describe the senior leaders as, 'incredible' and 'having a significant impact on the performance, ethos and culture in the academy'. Middle leadership continues to improve as a result of training with an external consultant and opportunities to share good practice with other schools. Those new to leadership roles are increasingly confident and becoming more effective in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and pupil progress. Staff feel highly supported by academy leaders and value the improvements resulting from high expectations, regular monitoring and feedback about their work.

The quality of teaching is improving. This is because activities are planned, particularly at Key Stage 2, which are well matched to pupils' needs with an appropriate level of challenge for the most able. In Key Stage 1 and the early years, activities to teach spelling and phonics (the sounds that letters and groups of letters make) are not always appropriate to the needs of the pupils either because they do not engage the pupils or because they are insufficiently focused on the stage the pupils are at. As a result some pupils are making slow progress with their knowledge and understanding of phonics and spelling.

The academy is at an early stage in developing its approach to the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar. All pupils have been assessed so teachers know how each pupil needs to improve. There is planned training for staff about spelling, punctuation and grammar during the spring term 2015. The spelling seen in pupils' work during the inspection is not improving quickly enough. Pupils are given regular opportunities to write at length. The quality and quantity of pupils' writing is

improving, resulting in better progress since September 2014. Boys in Year 6 are particularly proud of their progress in writing and say they are determined to do even better.

The quality of marking and feedback is improving. Pupils' work is marked regularly with constructive comments that challenge pupils to revisit and improve their work in daily 'fix-it' sessions. Pupils understand the marking and feedback policy, value the opportunity to improve their work and recognise the positive impact on their progress.

Assessment is becoming increasingly accurate. Data collected about pupil progress are carefully checked both by staff inside the academy and by external partners. These accurate data are used to monitor pupil progress and hold teachers to account for the achievement of pupils in their class. Pupils not making progress are quickly identified and provided with extra help. This extra help is personalised to meet the needs of each pupil so any gaps in their learning are quickly filled. The impact is better progress in almost all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for those pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium, additional government money.

The academy's own data show better attainment in reading and mathematics in the current Year 6 than in last year's cohort. The attainment in writing is not improving at the same rate. Attainment in all subjects is below the national average for Year 6 but from their starting points pupils are beginning to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The trend of improving attainment at Key Stage 1 is continuing this year; however, attainment is still below the national average.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning have continued to improve as a result of the consistent application of the behaviour policy. In lessons, particularly those in Key Stage 2, pupils remain on task, responding to the high expectations of their teachers. Pupils say teachers are presenting learning activities in an interesting way and say they 'love the school'. The academy has rigorous procedures for addressing poor attendance. The education welfare officer employed by the academy is unfailing in her work with parents to improve attendance. Attendance has a high profile throughout the academy and good attendance is regularly rewarded. Despite these efforts, attendance remains just below the national average and has not improved since this time last year.

Governance has improved. Governors have robust systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and pupil progress, including that of pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium. Governors provide effective challenge for academy leaders through visits to the academy and in governing body meetings. As a result the governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the academy.

### **Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The quality of leadership.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching at Key Stage 2. Teachers are planning activities which meet the needs of pupils more effectively.
- Better assessment processes that provide information about pupil progress, resulting in timely help for those pupils who are underachieving.

### **Weaknesses in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Attendance is not improving rapidly.
- Appropriate activities are not provided for all pupils to help them improve their spelling and the understanding of phonics.

### **External support**

The academy sponsor continues to provide effective challenge to leaders at half-termly monitoring meetings. A representative of the sponsor and external consultants provide support for individual teachers and leaders. The representative of the sponsor and the consultants also conduct regular monitoring visits to check on the impact of actions taken to address the areas for improvement. Academy leaders make good use of their links with other schools to enable staff, particularly newly qualified teachers, to observe and share good practice.