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13 March 2015

Mr Paul Dickinson  
Headteacher  
De La Salle School  
Mill Brow  
Eccleston  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
WA10 4QH

Dear Mr Dickinson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of De La Salle School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 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 December 2014.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with yourself, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and two representatives of the local authority. I made a tour of the school and reviewed the school's single central record of safeguarding checks. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, the former headteacher retired from the school in February 2015. As the headteacher of a secondary school, you have been appointed as interim headteacher for two days per week, together with a former secondary

headteacher who is acting as interim associate headteacher for an additional two days per week. The process of appointing a permanent headteacher is well underway.

A seconded senior leader and a lead practitioner for mathematics have been temporarily appointed.

A new Chair of the Governing Body has very recently taken up post and the governing body has been reconstituted.

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

Since your appointment, you have wasted no time in reviewing the roles of the leadership team so that senior leaders focus on close checking and evaluation of the performance of students. Through setting a clear vision for improvement, you have started to change the culture and emphasis in the school so that all are focused on raising the rates of progress made by students. This was reflected in my discussions with members of the leadership team. All staff that I spoke to share a sense of determination to bring about sustained improvement in the school. Senior leaders report that there is now no denial among staff members of the need to improve achievement and to do so with a sense of urgency.

The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan have been carefully constructed and tackle each of the areas identified by the last inspection report. Support from a lead advisor and challenge provided by the local authority's School Improvement Board provide clear mechanisms for support and challenge. There are appropriate markers built in so that all involved can plot the progress of the school. It would be helpful for some slight modification to the wording of some aspects of the plan to ensure that all involved understand what action is to be taken and how this will be checked. Targets for student performance are included in the plan but require the addition of 'better than expected progress' targets for disadvantaged students, in order to raise expectations and aspirations. Achievement data for this group of students are being reviewed to ensure that progress targets are high enough.

The school has a separate school improvement plan which has been amended in the light of the inspection. Adjustments are being made to ensure this plan links seamlessly with those in the local authority's action plan. By making these amendments, governors and the local authority will have a very clear route through the journey of improvement.

One of your immediate areas of focus has centred on the students who have the least amount of time left in school. You swiftly identified that the system of mixed year group tutoring for students in Year 11 presented a barrier to effectively targeting achievement. As a result, you have removed this method of working and replaced it with specific tutors for this year group, to allow for more bespoke work with individual students. The system of tutoring is under review for other year groups.

In order to tackle issues identified with the marking of students' work, a new system of marking has been introduced. Senior leaders conducted an extensive work scrutiny which shows that useful feedback is now provided to staff on the quality of their marking. This is a positive move. Nevertheless, it is too early to evaluate the effect on students' progress.

In order to accelerate improvement and increase the challenge and support offered to the senior leadership team, the governing body has been reconstituted. New members of the governing body bring significant expertise to the group. Additional structures, including an evaluation committee, have been introduced by the Chair of the Governing Body. This committee represents a key tool for challenging and evaluating the work of the school and the actions taken to tackle the areas for improvement.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's action plan is fit for purpose with the slight modifications detailed above.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for St. Helens. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Yarwood

**Her Majesty's Inspector**